



RECFISH AUSTRALIA

NEWS RELEASE

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**INCREASING VALUE OF AUSTRALIAN RECREATIONAL
FISHING REFLECTED IN MAJOR PARTIES' POLICIES**

The increasing social, health and economic value of recreational fishing to Australians was reflected in the strongest-ever policy commitments by the major parties to the nation's most popular single outdoor participation activity, Recfish Australia said today.

Recfish Australia, the peak national body representing the nation's 3.5 million fishers who support a large industry with the \$1.9 billion they spend annually on fishing, has reviewed the recently-announced recreational fishing policies of the Coalition and the Labor Party.

Both the Coalition and Labor have promised to fund Recfish Australia with \$100,000 a year for four years starting in 2004 – 2005. This is new money but the \$400,000 promised by the Coalition would restore the funding to Recfish Australia which it cut in 1996 on coming to government, ending 13 years of Commonwealth support for the peak national body.

In addition to the funding support for Recfish Australia, the Coalition has promised a further \$15 million and Labor an extra \$30.8 million to enhance and improve the quality of coastal and inland recreational fishing.

With its \$15 million, the Coalition would make available to community groups grants of up to \$100,000 to fund initiatives such as improvements at boat ramps, establishing and upgrading volunteer marine rescue groups to provide safety for anglers, fish restocking programs, resnagging rivers and waterways, and establishing artificial reefs.

A Labor government would direct its \$30.8 million at protecting and enhancing fish habitats and coastal environments through its Beaches and Coastline Policy. Fish habitats, both coastal and inland, are increasingly under threat from inappropriate land use, urban development and runoff from urban and rural catchments. Marine fish habitats are suffering from loss of coastal vegetation including seagrasses, mangroves, kelp beds and coastal forests, and the spread of invasive plant species.

In addition, Labor, which says the recreational fishing sector through Recfish Australia has a key role to play in advising government, has indicated that Recfish could receive

funding over and above the promised \$100,000 annually for four years for its work in other programs related to recreational fishing.

These include Labor's promised programs to:

- Increase participation in recreational and sport fishing by promoting “the benefits that come from engaging in a wholesome outdoor recreational and sporting activity”
- Promote increased health and safety in sport and recreation, including recreational fishing
- Widen community awareness of and commitment to the sound environmental and ecologically sustainable management of natural fisheries resources, and to
- Encourage sustainable fishing practices.

Labor says it would “also work closely with the States/Territories and Local Government to ensure that both inland and coastal recreational fishing, and the thousands of jobs it generates, has a sustainable future”.

Recfish Australia would also be involved in a special Labor government working group, including the federal Environment and Fisheries Ministers, to implement coastal protection strategies.

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