

Submission CORE – (What we have heard)

Since the release of draft management plans for the Buccaneer Archipelago Marine parks Recfishwest has discussed the proposals extensively with fishers (especially in Broome and Derby). Both local and visiting fishers have provided us with a great deal of feedback that we will use to construct the core of our submission on the draft management plans for these marine parks. **Some of the consistent feedback we have heard includes:**

General comments

- The Buccaneer Archipelago and surrounding waters are a special place for fishing.
- The draft plans propose to lock fishers out of 95% of their most valuable fishing spots.
- As an investment of taxpayers' money in conserving the things we all care about, marine parks should result in positive outcomes for everyone.
- Local fishers and Fishing Clubs are highly supportive of Traditional Owners and traditional knowledge playing a greater role in the management of these areas.
- Fishers are more than happy to avoid areas where cultural activities requiring privacy are taking place, although they rarely see any other people when visiting the area.
- Recreational fishing should be embraced within the park as it is a low-impact activity which can provide an excellent opportunity to collect additional data and engage park users about cultural values.
- Fishers are questioning why zoning was the only management tool used in the draft plans given Western Australia's global reputation for excellence in fisheries management, size and bag limits already in place, and a range of other fisheries management tools available.
- There are significant concerns that displaced commercial netting effort will be concentrated into smaller areas creating conflicts with recreational fishers, particularly closer to Derby, and that any such flow on effects must be managed properly.
- There are safety concerns that some of these zones will force fishers offshore and away from safe anchorages and nearshore waters.

Impact on quality of life

- Fishing is a key part of the Kimberly lifestyle and central to how people live. Whether it is spending time with family and friends, connecting with nature or teaching kids about boating and the outdoors, fishers have a deep connection with the archipelago and many have been visiting the area their entire lives. The archipelago provides a diversity of fishing experiences, including a range of species and habitats not available in Broome or Derby, which adds to the importance of the area.
- Fishing is a part of the social fabric of the community and the loss of access as proposed in these plans will greatly affect the 'livability' of Derby. Fishing is the reason many people live in Derby, an important catalyst for social interaction, a major drawcard local businesses use to attract staff and with no organized sport is often the only recreation many kids in Derby have.
- There are fears the draft plans are likely to lead to a deterioration of local relationships when access to undertake fishing activities in the marine park are granted based on cultural background.

A lack of science and outdated perceptions of recreational fishing

- The draft plans are seen as emotional documents based on Traditional Owner aspirations rather than management documents with specific and clear KPI's and fishers are not in a position to comment on the aspirations of others. Much of the future science priorities remain undefined

and the absence of information about recreational, cultural and commercial fishing impacts make it difficult to provide meaningful feedback on the draft plans.

- As much of the water within the parks are unsurveyed and uncharted it is unclear what is being threatened and how recreational fishing poses a threat.
- The perception recreational fishers travel to the archipelago to fill their Eskies is a myth. Fishing is an enabler for broader social interaction and fishers may only visit the area a few times a year. The large tidal movements don't allow for long periods of fishing time each day and current fishing rules restrict people to two days' bag limit regardless of how many days they spent in the marine park.
- Given the productivity of tropical waters, low visitation levels, limited access points and current fishing rules, the ecological impact recreational fishing has within the marine park is so small it is unlikely it could be quantified.
- Fishers do not understand why the activity of fishing is incompatible with some zoning types unless it is being conducted on a charter vessel. Clarity on the rationale for this type of management approach is required.
- Although fishers share concern about the impact of sealing the Cape Leveque Road, little work has been done to better understand the impact this will have on fishing within the archipelago. The amount of increased visitation comprising fishers intending to visit the archipelago compared to day-tripping tourists and/or people visiting friends and relatives remains unknown. The ability to easily restrict road entry to the peninsula and the existing bottle neck for launching at Cygnet Bay/Cape Leveque at peak times means increased visitation may not result in more vessels being able to launch or significantly more fishing pressure.

Specific comment on proposed zones

There is a lot of confusion about the rationale for many of the zones. The zones cover extremely large areas and recreational fishers do not interact with many of the significant marine fauna the zones are designed to protect e.g. turtles, dugongs, whales, sawfish, dolphins, crocodiles and rays. Many fishers expressed the desire to better understand of how fishing compromises cultural values, noting this would enable a greater understanding and hence acceptance of the plans generally.

Proposed sanctuary zones of most concern include:

- Robinson River and Helpman Island sanctuary zone – This area is a well known and popular location in close proximity to Derby. The creek systems to the north of Robinson River including Kimbolton Creek and Dam Creek are also highly popular and valued fishing locations. Fishing within this proposed sanctuary zone can be undertaken as a day trip from Derby although overnight stays and weekend trips are also common.
- Waddaddam (Coppermine Creek) – This area is a favourite for fishers. It is a scenic and natural safe harbour providing the opportunity to catch a feed while safely anchored. The middle /estuarine reaches of this creek are important fishing areas for barramundi, threadfin salmon, mangrove jack and fingermark. Coppermine creek also acts as a base from which to explore the waters of the Northern Archipelago.
- Yawalgi – This zone is a popular fishing location accessed by recreational fishers. The blue water fishing available in this area is highly valued and the area is within easy reach of people mooring in Coppermine Creek or at Cockatoo island.
- Biidbid – This zone incorporates an important area for recreational fishers. The area east of a line between Farr island and Tyrer island is popular for demersal (bottom) fishing and most fishing occurs in deeper water away from beaches used by nesting turtles.

- Yaloon (Cone Bay) – This creek is a popular place to catch smaller barramundi that have escaped from the nearby aquaculture facility. As these farmed fish are sourced from broodstock with Queensland genetics it is unclear how restricting recreational fishers from catching these imported escaped fish will benefit ecological values of the area. Given the existence of the Yalu community in the lower reaches of the creek, fishers are generally supportive of avoiding the waters in proximity of the community to provide community members with privacy. It is felt the proposed zone could be reduced in size retaining recreational fishers’ ability to catch a barramundi while also providing privacy for this community.
- Pender Bay – While an important area for whales, dolphins and dugongs with which recreational fishers do not interact, Pender Bay and the Cultural Protection Zones on both sides of the peninsular remove nearly every opportunity to catch a barramundi, mudcrab or mangrove jack.
- Gananguddee Fewuleg (Dog Leg Creek) – There has been a fuel barge at this location for many years and recreational fishers rely on this barge for topping up their tank. The presence of the barge means fishers no longer need to carry excessive amounts of fuel with them thereby reducing the risk of fuel spills throughout the archipelago.

Proposed Cultural protection Zones of most concern include:

- Oobeeyal & Oonggaliyan (Inland Sea) –When entering from Stokes Bay to the south or after navigating Cascade Bay to the north, the Inland Sea provides safe anchorage and is one of the most important areas within the archipelago for recreational fishers. It offers safe fishing for species such as barramundi, threadfin salmon, mangrove jack and fingermark. Its proximity to Derby makes it ideal for an overnight stay or a day trip. Additionally, the Inland Sea is the perfect place to complete repairs if required or to ride out bad weather. It is a vast area and prohibiting people from catching a fish to eat is likely to result in them anchoring in other less safe areas.
- Duddgu & Janbarrgal (Graveyards) – Another area of great significance for fishers is Graveyards. It also provides a safe anchorage and a range of fishing opportunities in sheltered waters. From catching trevally, fingermark and tuna at the entrance to Graveyards from Strickland Bay or catching barramundi in the tidal creeks, Graveyards provides both blue water and creek fishing. The large pearl shell beds exposed at low tide are of no value to recreational fishers who avoid this area during low tides. The impact of restricting fishing in Graveyards and the Inland Sea is significant and should not be underestimated.
- Garngarngaddaj & Barrali (Strickland Bay) – Recreational fishers highly value fishing in this area for barramundi and mangrove jacks. The conservation purpose of this zone recognises the significant cultural stories associated with this area and the important cultural resources that can be found in the hollows of some jindirm. As recreational fishers do not interact with or look for any resources in mangrove hollows their incompatibility with cultural values of the area is limited.
- Dampier Peninsula - The large sections of waters along the Dampier Peninsula proposed to be off-limits for recreational fishing encompass nearly all the opportunity to fish in creeks along the peninsular thereby effectively preventing people from catching a barramundi, mudcrab or mangrove jack.