

## WHY RELEASE WEIGHTS FOR DEMERSALS?

All boats across WA line fishing for demersal fish species (bottom fish) must carry a release weight to help improve the survival of released fish.

Despite fishers' good intentions, some captured demersal species like dhufish can experience barotrauma, especially when caught at depths of 30m or more. Others like baldchin can experience barotrauma from depths as shallow as 10m.

Barotrauma is a result of the expansion of gases in the swim bladder and other organs when fish do not have time to adjust to the rapid changes in water pressure as they are pulled to the surface. Undersize or unwanted fish that are returned to the water suffering from barotrauma may often have difficulty swimming and returning to the bottom and are at much higher risk to post-release mortality.

WA anglers, who care about conservation, have lead the world in helping make release weights compulsory. This is because release weights are scientifically proven to reduce post-release mortality.

This is shown by West Coast Bioregion anglers using release weights for the past decade to ensure demersals, including dhufish and breaksea cod, are returned safely to the depth from which they came.

With all skippers across WA required to carry a release weight, it further proves the fishing community is committed to protecting and sustaining our fish stocks!



## RELEASE WEIGHTS

Best ways to release demersals



DO YOUR BIT TO  
PROTECT DEMERSALS



For more information contact:

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## THE RELEASE WEIGHT

The release weight comprises a heavy weighted barbless hook which has a loop at the top to attach a retrieval line. The release weight can be either attached on a rod and reel or a handline, specially set aside for releasing fish. The release weight is attached through the lip of a fish to be released and then gently lowered into the water before being dropped back to the seafloor, where it is then easily detached from the fish by a tug on the line when it reaches the bottom.

## USING THE RELEASE WEIGHT

The release weight is simple to use. The complete release procedure can be performed by one person for small fish, while you may find it will be easier to release bigger fish using the release weight with the cooperation of two people. Release weights come in different sizes- use the bigger sized weights for bigger fish.



## STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO USING A RELEASE WEIGHT

- 1 Gently remove the hook using pliers if necessary, remove the hook from the fish's mouth as carefully as possible;
- 2 Insert the release weight's barbless hook through the fish's lip;
- 3 With a line attached to the release weight, gently place the fish in the water and release the line, allowing the device to take the fish towards the seabed;
- 4 Once the fish is back at the seafloor, lightly tug the line to detach the release weight from the fish; and,
- 5 Avoid any sudden jerks while the fish is descending, because it could dislodge the weight from the fish before it has safely reached the bottom.

## ADVANTAGES

- Gets fish back to its habitat fast.
- Re-pressurises the fish to lessen the effects of barotrauma.
- Reduces predation through decreased surface and mid water exposure time.
- Improves the chance of post-release survival.

## FISH HANDLING

- Keep fish out of water for the minimum time possible.
- Work fast but without haste.
- Always use wet hands or a wet cloth.
- Place fish on a wet surface. Avoid hot dry surfaces.
- Avoid contact with gills and eyes of fish and try to keep shaded.
- Fully support the body of large fish at all times to avoid organ damage.
- Catch and release fishing for demersals is not OK - fish for other species such as pelagics once you've reached your demersal bag limit.

## DEMERSAL SPECIES WHICH CAN BENEFIT FROM RELEASE WEIGHT USE

- WA dhufish
- Pink snapper
- Mulloway / Northern jewfish
- Red emperor
- Cod species such as breaksea cod and harlequin fish
- Spangled emperor
- Foxfish
- Western blue groper
- Baldchin groper

