



# Have your say:

## East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery

### Summary of proposed management changes

Are you a recreational fisher? Are you a commercial fisher? Are you involved in an organisation or industry that relies on fisheries, or do you simply enjoy locally caught seafood such as bream, whiting or flathead?

The Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries Queensland, (DPI&F) has reviewed the East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery, which covers many of the important inshore species. A number of changes are proposed to the management of the fishery including new and amended bag and size limits, new netting arrangements and improvements to shark management.

We want to hear what you think about the proposed changes.

Have your say before 17 March 2008.



# The Fishery

The East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery is the state's largest and most diverse fishery. Its coastal and estuarine waters are home to the widest range of fished species in Queensland. The major species taken from the fishery include barramundi, mullet, bream, whiting, flathead, shark and some smaller mackerels such as spotted mackerel and grey mackerel. The fishery has the largest level of participation of all Queensland fisheries—with more than 750 000 recreational fishers and approximately 500 commercial operators.

## The review

The review of the East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery commenced in October 2006.

DPI&F has worked closely with recreational and commercial fishers, conservation groups, the community and other government agencies to develop proposals for the future management of the fishery. The department has sought community input to the development of future management over three stages:

### 1. Public meetings

More than 40 public meetings were held along the east coast in late 2006 to gather information on current management arrangements, and discuss how the fishery could be better managed and further developed in the future.

### 2. Questionnaire

A questionnaire was released in December 2006 to seek further public comment on the development of appropriate measures for managing the fishery. A total of 845 responses were received.

### 3. Consultation on proposals

The DPI&F has continued to work with stakeholders through the Inshore Fin Fish Management Advisory Committee and its working groups to develop proposals for future management.

A further 45 public meetings will be held along the east coast in early 2008 to outline the proposals and gather feedback.

The final result of consultation will be an East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Management Plan.

## Have your say

This document summarises the proposed changes to management of the fishery. More detail about the proposals is available in the *Regulatory Impact Statement and draft Public Benefit Test for the East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery* (RIS).

The DPI&F will hold public meetings to discuss the proposed changes in early 2008. Check the website for details.

The DPI&F wants your comments on these proposals. **We must receive your response by 5 pm Monday 17 March 2008.**

Copies of the RIS and a response form for your feedback are available at [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb) or contact the DPI&F Business Information Centre on 13 25 23.



## Size and bag limits

Size limits are a simple, yet extremely effective tool to protect the sustainability of fish stocks. Size limits ensure fish have an opportunity to spawn prior to being caught, therefore contributing to the future populations. Size limits are based on a species size at maturity and apply to both commercial and recreational fishers.

Bag limits help to protect the sustainability of fish stocks by limiting excessive catches. They also help promote responsible fishing practices and take account of changing community attitudes that no longer tolerate excessive or unlimited catches. Bag limits take into account how big a species grows, how quickly it grows and how naturally abundant the species is. For example, if fish grow slowly to a large size (e.g. barramundi), a smaller bag limit is usually applied. For more abundant faster growing fish (e.g. whiting), a larger bag limit is applied.

Many of the inshore fin fish species already have size or bag limits. These were reviewed to make sure they remain appropriate. There are also new limits proposed for some species.

A set of guiding principles were used to set size and bag limits for the fishery. These principles include:

- use the size at maturity for fish as a basis for setting size limits
- strive for simplicity wherever possible
- consider limits for species where there are sustainability concerns
- take into account the social and economic impacts on commercial and recreational fishers
- reflect limits in adjacent jurisdictions where possible.

The biological size at maturity was the highest priority when setting size limits.



**“Bag limits” as described in this document are *in-possession* limits. They are not daily limits.**

## Proposal 1: A range of new bag and size limits are proposed

Species	Current size limit (cm)	Proposed size limit (cm)	Current bag limit	Proposed bag limit	Rationale
Amberjack	No limit	75	No limit	2	Both amberjack and samsonfish mature at around 75 cm.
Barramundi	58–120	58–120	5	5	No change is proposed. The current size limit, while different to the Gulf of Carpentaria limit, is widely accepted and is effective at protecting the sustainability of barramundi.
Bream: pikey, tarwhine, yellowfin	23	23	No limit	Combined 30	The 23 cm limit already allows most fish to spawn prior to capture. An increase to 25 cm was considered, but was not supported as it could reduce commercial and recreational catches by up to 40%.
Dart: common, small spotted, snub nosed, swallow tailed	No limit	No limit	No limit	Combined 30	Dart are productive and fast growing species, which lessens the need for a size limit. A combined bag limit is proposed instead.
Dolphin fish	45	50	No limit	5	Dolphin fish are extremely productive, reaching maturity in 3 months. Given the productivity of the species, a higher bag limit (5) is proposed compared to other pelagic species (limit of 2).
Estuary cod: blackspot	No limit	38–100	No limit	5	The increase to 38 cm aligns estuary cod with other cod species in the coral reef fin fish fishery and better reflects the size at maturity, which is around 40 cm. The maximum limit was reduced to align with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.
Estuary cod: goldspot	35–120	38–100	10	5	
Fingermark (large-scale sea perch)	35	45	10	5	An increased size limit will help further protect juvenile fish while still allowing recreational fishers the opportunity to catch them in the inshore fishery. Because the size limit is still below the size at maturity (around 65 cm), a lower bag limit is also proposed.
Flathead: bar-tailed and sand	30	30	No limit	Combined limit of 5 for all flathead	A standard flathead size limit across the different species was considered, but it was recognised that the biology and growth of the species are too different to accommodate this.
Flathead: dusky (mud)	40–70	40–70	5		A size limit of 40–75 cm was considered, but not supported because it would allow more fish to be taken, reducing spawning by around 15%. The concept of allowing one trophy fish above the maximum size limit is equivalent of not having a maximum size limit and was therefore not supported.

Species	Current size limit (cm)	Proposed size limit (cm)	Current bag limit	Proposed bag limit	Rationale
Garfish: snub nosed, half beak, sea, longtail, river, three-by-two	No limit	No limit	No limit	30	A bag limit of 30 was proposed in recognition of the sometimes large catches that recreational fishers take for bait. Following recent research, there are also concerns in NSW regarding overfishing of garfish.
Grass sweetlip	30	30	No limit	10	The size limit is currently set above the size at maturity, providing adequate protection. The Reef Management Advisory Committee recommended a bag limit of 10 to be consistent with other sweetlips in the reef line fishery.
Grunter: small spotted	30	30	No limit	10 combined	The current size limit is considered appropriate for small spotted grunter, however limited biological information is available. The combined bag limit of 10 is proposed as a way of reducing the potential for black market activity.
Grunter: spotted (javelin fish)	30	40	No limit		Spotted grunter (javelin fish) mature at a larger size (between 40–45 cm) than small spotted grunter and require a different size limit. The working group and Management Advisory Committee recognised that education will be needed on how to identify the different species.
Jewfish: black	45	75	10	2	The current size limit for jewfish is set significantly below the size at maturity (around 85 cm). The proposed 75 cm limit provides additional protection and is consistent with the similar species caught in the south (mulloway).
Jewfish: silver	45	No limit	No limit	Combined limit of 10	There are a number of smaller species of jewfish that do not grow as large as black jewfish and mulloway. It was agreed that the larger more targeted species should have a size limit of 75 cm (e.g. black jewfish and mulloway), while the smaller and more rarely caught jewfish should be covered by a bag limit instead. The combined bag limit of 10 addresses any issues of identifying the difference between silver jewfish and wiretooth jewfish.
Jewfish: wiretooth	No limit	No limit	No limit		
Kingfish: black (cobia)	75	75	10	2	The current size limit is set at the size at maturity, providing appropriate protection.
Kingfish: yellowtail	50	60	No limit	2	The current limit is below the size at maturity, (60–65 cm). The bag limit of 2 is consistent with other large pelagic species.
Luderick (black bream)	23	27	No limit	10	There is some concern about declining catches of luderick in NSW. A limit of 30 cm was originally proposed, but amended to 27 cm to be consistent with NSW as most of the catch is taken around the border.

Species	Current size limit (cm)	Proposed size limit (cm)	Current bag limit	Proposed bag limit	Rationale
Mackerel: grey	50	60	10	5	Individual limits and a combined limit of 10
Mackerel: school	50	50	30	10	
Mackerel: shark	50	50	No limit	10	
Mackerel: spotted	60	60	5	5	
Mangrove jack	35	35	No limit	5	A 40 cm limit was considered, but not supported, as it would result in the discard of a large proportion of the catch in estuaries. Research indicates that the fishery is not fully exploited. The 35 cm limit helps protect juvenile fish while still allowing recreational fishers the opportunity to catch mangrove jack in the inshore fishery. A bag limit of 5 is designed to limit the significant catches taken by some fishers.
Mullet: diamond scale	No limit	No limit	No limit	20	The bag limit of 20 is designed to prevent some fishers taking excessive quantities of mullet, particularly in cast nets. Diamond mullet is easy to identify and grows to a larger size than most other mullet species.
Mullet: sea	30	30	No limit	20	Sea mullet is the main species taken by both commercial and recreational fishers and currently has a size limit of 30 cm, which is set at the size at maturity. The bag limit of 20 is designed to prevent some fishers taking excessive quantities of mullet, particularly in cast nets.

Species	Current size limit (cm)	Proposed size limit (cm)	Current bag limit	Proposed bag limit	Rationale
Mulloway	45	75	10	2	Research from NSW and WA indicates female mulloway mature at around 70–75 cm. The current size limit is far below this.
Queenfish	No limit	50	No limit	5	The size at maturity is thought to be around 70 cm. A 70 cm size limit was not supported due to the potentially significant discards and the low survival following release. Queenfish is an important by-product species in the net fishery and is also targeted by many recreational fishers. The size limit of 50 cm provides additional protection to juveniles.
Samsonfish	No limit	75	No limit	2	Samsonfish mature at approximately 75 cm. They are very similar in appearance to amberjack, so the proposed size limits are the same.
Sharks and rays	No limit	No limit	No limit	1	There is significant concern nationally and internationally about the sustainability of sharks. Recreational fishers take a substantial quantity of shark—up to 25% of the commercial catch.
Squid, cuttlefish, octopus	No limit	No limit	No limit	Combined 50	There are many different species of squid, cuttlefish and octopus taken in the fishery. Size limits for these individual species would be inappropriate. A combined limit of 50 will limit significant catch of squid, cuttlefish and octopus.
Tailor	30	35	20 (30 Fraser extended trips)	20	The most recent stock assessment indicates that the stock is fished down to the point that mostly young fish remain (1 and 2 year olds). The stock assessment report recommended that the size limit be increased to 40 cm. However a 35 cm size limit would result in less discards from the recreational and commercial catches compared to a limit of 40 cm. It is also proposed to remove the extended bag limit on Fraser Island because it is inequitable with other similar fishing areas such as Moreton and Stradbroke Islands and as a rule, extended bag limits are difficult to enforce. The majority of Fraser Island is now also closed to commercial beach netting.
Threadfin: king	40	60	No limit	5	King threadfin change sex from male to female at approximately 115 cm. A 60 cm limit will protect the smaller males and give more males an opportunity to reach the size at which they become females.

Species	Current size limit (cm)	Proposed size limit (cm)	Current bag limit	Proposed bag limit	Rationale
Threadfin: blue	40	40	No limit	10	Biological information from the Gulf of Carpentaria suggests that males become females at around 60–65 cm, but fishers have regularly seen fish roed up at 40 cm. This may indicate that the information from the Gulf is not relevant to the east coast.
Trevally (all)	No limit	No limit	No limit	Combined 20	There are around 20 species of trevally caught on the east coast, all of which have slightly varying sizes at maturity. A combined limit of 20 is proposed to prevent excessive catches.
Wahoo	75	75	10	2	Wahoo are similar to Spanish mackerel in appearance and biology. For ease of identification and consistency with other pelagic species, maintaining the size limit of 75 cm is proposed.
Whiting: golden lined	23	23	No limit	All three species combined limit of 30	The 23 cm size limit currently in place allows the majority of whiting to spawn prior to capture. The impact of increasing the size limit to 25 cm would be significant for both recreational fishers and commercial net fishers. Data indicates that up to 40% of whiting taken recreationally may be 23–25 cm. If a limit of 25 cm was introduced there may also be a 40% reduction in commercial catches in some areas.
Whiting: northern	No limit	23	No limit		
Whiting: sand (summer)	23	23	No limit		
Whiting: winter (diver)	No limit	No limit	No limit	50	Winter whiting mature at a significantly smaller size than summer whiting (around 18–20 cm). A size limit of 20 cm was considered, however it was agreed that winter whiting are extremely productive and grow quickly, reducing the need for a size limit. It was agreed that a bag limit of 50 is proposed to reduce the sometimes excessive catches taken by recreational fishers to a fair level.

## Proposal 2: Removing extended bag limits

Charter fishers on trips longer than 48 hours can currently take twice the quantity of certain species than other recreational fishers are permitted to take. This extended bag limit currently applies to spotted mackerel, grey mackerel, shark mackerel, mullet, black jewfish, cobia, estuary cod and wahoo. These provisions are inconsistent with the remainder of the inshore species. Extended bag limits were identified as inequitable, both between fishers (i.e. for extended charter trips) and between regions (i.e. Fraser Island extended limit). The inshore fishery is based near the shore and is characterised by shorter trips compared to, for example, the coral reef fin fish fishery. As a principle, it was agreed that extended bag limits should not apply in the inshore fishery. Consequently, it is proposed to limit charter fishers to standard bag limits and remove the extended bag limit for tailor on Fraser Island.



# Sharks and rays

Sharks and rays are an important part of the fishery. They provide a valuable export product in shark fins and affordable local seafood in *flake*. There is also a substantial recreational catch of sharks. However, because of their slow growth and limited reproductive capacity, the risks to sharks and rays from fishing are quite high. In many overseas countries, sharks are seriously depleted because of these characteristics.

A package of new measures is proposed to ensure that the shark fishery on the east coast can continue on a sustainable basis. The package has a number of objectives including:

1. limit the overall catch of sharks on the east coast
2. minimise the risk to more vulnerable species
3. collect better information.

## Proposal 3: Introduction of a new shark fishery symbol

A new S fishery symbol is proposed to limit the number of commercial shark fishers. All commercial net or line fishers who wish to retain shark in significant quantities will need to demonstrate a minimum catch criteria of 500 kg per year in at least two out of five years (years to be specified) and pay an annual licence fee of \$580 for the symbol. This will limit the catch of shark in the longer term, improve monitoring of the catch and help ensure a sustainable shark catch overall.

A performance measure of 700 tonnes is also proposed. This measure will apply to the total shark catch, not just that caught by S symbol holders. Within three months of becoming aware that the 700 tonne limit has been reached, DPI&F must initiate a review and finalise a timetable for appropriate management responses.

## Proposal 4: Commercial in-possession limits for sharks or rays

Commercial net fishers who do not possess an S symbol will be restricted to a basic in-possession limit of 10 sharks or rays. Commercial line fishers will be restricted to four sharks or rays. This allows for a small number of sharks to be retained when they are incidentally caught while fishing for other species. However, it also ensures the majority of fishers cannot target shark.

It is proposed that fishers who do not possess an S symbol must retain the whole shark or ray with fins on. This is designed to prevent the targeting of large sharks—which are otherwise unmarketable—for their fins.

## Proposal 5: Participation in the DPI&F Fishery Observer Program

In order to have a long-term sustainable shark fishery based on sound science it is essential that better information is collected on the species caught; their size, and the selectivity of nets. The DPI&F Fishery Observer Program can collect this information. It is proposed that those fishers who hold an S symbol will be required to participate in the program when requested to assist long-term management of the fishery.

## Proposal 6: New no-take species and restrictions on more vulnerable species

Commercial and recreational fishers take a number of more vulnerable species of sharks and rays. Some of these species are listed as endangered, threatened or protected under Australian legislation. It is proposed that the taking of spartooth shark and freshwater sawfish will be prohibited. In addition, it is proposed that commercial fishers will be limited to an in-possession limit of one each for dwarf sawfish, green sawfish, white spotted guitarfish, grey reef shark and white tip reef shark.



# Dugong Protection Areas (DPAs)

Dugongs are an iconic marine mammal protected under Queensland and Commonwealth legislation. In 1998, 16 Dugong Protection Areas (DPA) were established between Hervey Bay and Hinchinbrook, to minimise the interactions between commercial fishing nets and dugongs. Information on dugong strandings suggests that DPAs are minimising the impact of commercial netting. However, it is timely to review these closures to ensure they remain appropriate.

## Proposal 7: Protection of dugong around headlands

Headlands are important movement corridors for dugong and the use of foreshore set nets in these areas is already heavily restricted. Under current arrangements, offshore set nets can be used in waters deeper than 2 m. Waters around headlands often drop off quite dramatically compared to foreshores, rivers and creeks, making them *offshore waters* and allowing the use of 600 m set nets of larger mesh. To prevent fishers using offshore set nets around headlands, the DPI&F proposes introducing a 500 m exclusion zone from high water (as well as the requirement to be in at least 2 m of water at any stage of the tide).

## Proposal 8: Extension of the Gladstone DPA

The area around the Gladstone DPA B Zone is an important dugong area. To increase the protection of dugongs, it is proposed to extend the current B Zone to include waters off Facing Island.

## Proposal 9: Use of low risk nets in DPAs

DPA A Zones provide the highest level of protection for dugong, but still allow the use of certain low risk nets. It is proposed to expand the types of nets that can be used in DPA A Zones to include two other low risk nets – a 400m general purpose net (N1) or a 200 m barramundi set net (N2). Fishers will be required to be on the water in attendance of these nets at all times to ensure the risks to dugong remain low. There would be no increase in the total amount of net that a fisher could use, as only one net will be allowed to be used at any one time.



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# Netting

There are currently a range of restrictions on what types of nets commercial and recreational fishers can use.

Netting arrangements for the commercial fishery in particular have become extremely complex over the years, making it difficult for commercial fishers to comply with the legislation. A review of commercial netting arrangements was undertaken to address this issue. Port meetings were held with commercial fishers to identify areas for possible improvement. A series of changes are proposed to simplify the current arrangements and provide greater flexibility for fishers, while ensuring the regulations continue to protect the sustainability of inshore fin fish stocks.

## Proposal 10: Restrictions on recreational netting

Recreational fishers are currently permitted to use either cast or bait nets. There are restrictions on the length and drop of nets as well as mesh size. It is proposed to retain these measures and introduce a number of additional restrictions on the use of cast and bait nets in recognition of the large numbers of fish that can be caught using these nets.

The following changes are proposed:

- a limit of 1 cast or bait net in use per person
- a requirement for fishers to mark nets with their name and address similar to crab apparatus.

## Proposal 11: Changes to fishery area

It is proposed to align the geographic area of the commercial fishery with the Offshore Constitutional Settlement—the agreement between the state and Australian governments about management of fisheries resources. This will change the northern boundary of the fishery area from around 60 km west of Cape York, to the point at Cape York. No impact on fishers is expected.

## Proposal 12: Changes to netting under an N1 symbol

The N1 fishery symbol allows commercial fishers to use a range of nets along the east coast to take fin fish with the exception of coral reef fin fish, Spanish mackerel, spotted mackerel and barramundi.

The following changes are proposed:

General netting:

- Introduce a general purpose (GP) net for use throughout the fishery and reduce the number of descriptions of how nets may be used.
- Change the minimum mesh size of a GP net from 50 mm to 45 mm.
- Allow the use of 25 mm mesh in a quarter of a GP net only when it is used as a back net.
- Introduce a maximum mesh size of 162.5 mm for a GP net.
- Retain the maximum lengths of GP nets (400 m north of Baffle Creek and 800 m south of Baffle Creek).
- Allow a GP net to be set for 2 hours in nearshore waters throughout the fishery.

Offshore nets:

- Increase the minimum mesh size of offshore nets in Hervey Bay from 88 mm to 100 mm.
- Extend the area of Hervey Bay where offshore nets may be used to include Platypus Bay.
- Prescribe a single mesh size for offshore nets of 162.5 mm (except for Hervey Bay where a mesh size range of 100–162.5 mm will be permitted).
- Remove special restrictions on the use of offshore nets in Keppel Bay.

River and set nets:

- Prohibit the use of river set nets under an N1. Fishers will still be able to use river set nets under the N2 fishery symbol.
- Prohibit the use of foreshore set nets between Burnett River and Baffle Creek under an N1. Fishers will still be able to use a GP net in this area.

## Proposal 13: Changes to netting under an N2 symbol

The N2 fishery symbol allows fishers to use a range of nets to take fish other than coral reef fin fish, Spanish mackerel and spotted mackerel. It is generally a large mesh set net fishery targeting barramundi.

The following changes are proposed:

- Allow an increase in the number of river set nets that can be used if the overall length of net used is decreased.
- Allow the use of one 120 m x 125 mm mesh river-set net to target salmon between May and August.
- Remove the ability of fishers to use offshore set and drift nets under the N2 symbol.
- Replace the requirement that only a third of a foreshore set net may extend below the low water mark with a requirement that one end of the net be in water less than 2 m deep at all times.

The table below shows the range of fishery symbols that currently regulate the use of nets:

Symbol	Description	Number of symbols (at June 2007)
N1	General netting along the east coast	481
N2	Barramundi netting along the east coast	189
N5	Elements of N1 and N2 between Baffle and Kauri Creek	4
N6	Bait netting	1679
N7	General netting along the east coast	4
N8	Netting along the east coast 3 n-mile offshore	0
K1–K8	Ocean beach fishery predominantly targeting mullet	61

## Proposal 14: Rationalising other fishery symbols

The following changes to the current arrangements are proposed:

Remove symbols:

- Remove the N5 fishery symbol and issue current holders of an N5 symbol with an N2 symbol.
- Remove the N7 fishery symbol and issue current holders of an N7 symbol with an N1 symbol.
- Remove the N8 fishery symbol from the legislation.
- Remove the ability for fishers to sell fish taken under an N6, unless they can demonstrate a history of commercial use of bait nets.
- Allow all crab and line fishers to use bait nets to take bait for their own use (not for sale).

Introduce new symbols:

- Create a new N4 symbol for the use of 1200 m offshore mesh nets in waters greater than 20 m deep to support new management arrangements to ensure the sustainability of shark. It is proposed that up to 25 N4 symbols will be issued in recognition of the number of fishers who target shark using this apparatus.
- Move the southern boundary for the use of 1200 m offshore nets from Moreton Island to Double Island Point.
- Issue N4 symbols on application and surrender of two other net symbols.
- Allow the use of a GP net and 600 m offshore nets under an N4 symbol.
- Prohibit holders of an N4 symbol having more than 1200 m of net on board the vessel to ensure compliance with the maximum net length.
- Create a new N10 symbol for the use of tunnel nets in the current tunnel net areas to ensure that there is no expansion in the use of this apparatus and that the fishery remains sustainable.



- Issue N10 symbols on application and a demonstrated history in the tunnel net fishery.
- Require the surrender of an N1 symbol but allow fishers to use a GP net and 600 m offshore nets under an N10 symbol.
- Restrict tunnel netting to night time only between Wynnum Creek and Point Talburpin on the western side of Moreton Bay.
- Require the use of an approved by-catch reduction device in a tunnel net.

Introduce fees for new symbols:

- An annual fee of \$2200 for the new N4 symbol.
- An annual fee of \$1100 for the new N10 symbol.
- An annual fee of \$150 for the N6 symbol.

## Proposal 15: General changes to commercial netting

There are a number of general provisions that apply to all commercial netting.

The following changes are proposed:

Attendance:

- Introduce a 400 m attendance requirement on offshore set nets.
- Allow an exception to net attendance only when a fisher contacts the automated interactive voice response system and reports that the net is inoperative. The fisher can then be up to 5 n-miles away from an inoperative net for up to 6 hours.
- Require that attendance of nets must be *on the water* for the majority of nets.

Definitions:

- Define *nearshore* waters as those where the water is less than 2 m deep at any stage of the tide.
- Define *closed waterways* as waters upstream of the mouth of the river or creek at high water.
- Specify examples of a *reasonable excuse* for having net on board a boat with fish in it (i.e. *bagging on*).

Other:

- Clarify the prohibition on using nets within navigation channels and across waterways.
- Specify that nets used in the *nearshore* area must have one end in nearshore waters at all times.
- Specify that nets used in the *offshore* area must have both ends in offshore waters at all times.
- Prohibit use of any commercial net (except commercial bait nets and set pocket nets) within 200 m of a public jetty or wharf.
- Provide minimum requirements for the marking of all nets.
- Clarify that only one net may be used at a time under any net symbol.
- Allow for the use of recognised By-catch Reduction Devices.



# Closures

There are almost 200 closures that apply to either commercial or recreational fishers in the fishery. Closures in place for sustainability reasons were reviewed to ensure that they are still appropriate. New closures that protect the sustainability of the fishery were also considered.

## Proposal 16: Eurimbula Creek

Eurimbula Creek is adjacent to a national park. It is currently closed to taking mud crabs and commercial net fishing. It is proposed to make the creek closed to all forms of fishing to create a fish sanctuary that will provide useful baseline information on habitat and fish diversity.

## Proposal 17: Burdekin River

The wording of the Burdekin River closure no longer reflects the current location of the FB Boards and may not reflect the original intent of the closure. The area has undergone significant physical change over time and it is proposed to move the boundary to a more physically stable location which is described by a line of longitude. The use of FB Boards in this location is not practical given the dynamic nature of the river.

## Proposal 18: Weekend closures

The weekend closure in the Great Sandy Strait currently runs from 2 pm Friday to 2 pm Sunday from 1 February to 30 November. All other weekend closures operate from 6 pm Friday to 6 pm Sunday. It is proposed to change the Great Sandy Strait closure time to 6 pm Friday to 6 pm Sunday, in line with the rest of the east coast.

## Proposal 19: Platypus Bay

Commercial fishers have proposed the introduction of a closure to the use of offshore set nets in Platypus Bay (all waters east of a line from Rooney Point to Sandy Point) from midday 1 August to midday 31 October every year. This closure is intended to minimise the risk of interaction between these nets and migrating humpback whales, while still allowing the use of other lower risk nets. Because there is broad industry support for the proposal, this closure may be implemented via a code of practice rather than legislation.

## Proposal 20: Southern Moreton Island netting closure

Commercial fishers have proposed the introduction of a tunnel netting closure along south-western Moreton Island from Reeder's Point to Oyster Area 64. This closure is intended to provide additional protection to an important habitat area for fish congregation and dispersal into Moreton Bay.

## Proposal 21: Rodds Harbour

There is currently a closure to commercial and recreational netting in Rodds Harbour to prevent black marketing of prawns. However, the two closures are worded slightly differently in the legislation, so that recreational fishers can access some small creeks where commercial fishers cannot. It is proposed to make the two closures consistent.

### *Stage 2: Local solutions for local issues*

There have been numerous calls from different sectors for exclusive access to specific local areas. DPI&F proposes addressing this issue with a separate regional consultation process—Stage 2. This second stage will address localised issues such as where fishing occurs in a region, the use of certain apparatus, and closures.



## Other issues

A number of other issues were raised at stakeholder meetings in 2006, through the questionnaire and during the consultation process. These other issues related mostly to quota management.

### Proposal 22: Quota managed species

Spotted mackerel and tailor are the only two species in the fishery that have a Total Allowable Catch (TAC). A number of changes are proposed to the management of these species to better utilise the TAC and improve reporting against the TAC. There is no proposal to change the current TAC of 120 tonnes for tailor and 140 tonnes for spotted mackerel.

Proposed changes include:

- Remove the commercial in-possession limit of 150 spotted mackerel (line caught). This is considered unnecessary given the TAC has not been reached.
- Increase the number of spotted mackerel that net fishers can keep—when caught incidentally—from 15 to 50.
- Reduce the incidental catch limit for tailor from 100 kg to 30 kg to better reflect the amount of the TAC that is caught. This is effectively a reporting change, not a management change.

### Proposal 23: Net caught reef fish and Spanish mackerel

It is proposed to allow net fishers to retain the equivalent of the recreational bag limit for coral reef fin fish and Spanish mackerel when caught incidentally in nets. Net fishers who hold quota will be required to report these catches against their quota and all net fishers will be required to treat such fish as if taken for personal use (i.e. fin-clipped and not sold).

## Frequently-asked questions

### I raised a particular issue at a public meeting in 2006. How do I know it was considered?

The DPI&F has aimed for an open and transparent consultation process to review the fishery and develop new arrangements for its use. All of the issues raised at the meetings in 2006 were considered by the Management Advisory Committee, the working groups or DPI&F. Some of the issues considered did not result in proposed changes. A summary of the decision-making process for each issue is in the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS), along with an explanation of why a change was not proposed. The RIS is available at the DPI&F website: [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb) or from the DPI&F Business Information Centre on 13 25 23.

### What about marine park zoning? How does that fit in with changes to the fishery?

The Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan has been in place for ten years and is under review. The DPI&F is working closely with the lead agency in charge of management of State Marine Parks, the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). DPI&F will provide detailed information on recreational and commercial fisheries in the Bay to minimise the impact of changes to the zoning of the Moreton Bay Marine Park. DPI&F also works closely with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the EPA to manage other marine parks in Queensland.

### There aren't many changes to closures. I'm sure there were more changes suggested at the meetings last year.

One of the most difficult issues in fisheries management is how to share access between fishery users. At almost every meeting there were requests to grant exclusive access to one sector or another in certain areas. DPI&F recognised early on that resource allocation issues are difficult, and proposes to address them with a separate, regionally-based consultation process—Stage 2. It is essential that stakeholders in local communities can negotiate how they share access in their area. DPI&F recognises that the best outcomes will be achieved if resource allocation issues are addressed locally rather than at the state level.

The DPI&F propose a period of time for people to apply for specific arrangements in their area. The department will help facilitate the consideration of applications by gathering additional information and establishing a community consultation panel, with an independent chair. These panels will consider applications and make a recommendation to the department on where fishing occurs in a region, use of apparatus, and closures.

### When and where will public meetings be held to discuss these proposals?

Over 45 meetings will be held along the east coast, from Cooktown to Southport, during early 2008. To find the location and timing of your nearest meeting, visit the DPI&F website at [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/fishweb) or contact the DPI&F Business Information Centre on 13 25 23 for details.

# Inshore fin fish species

The fish listed below are some of the major species caught in the fishery;



Barramundi  
(*Lates calcarifer*)



Mangrove jack  
(*Lutjanus argentimaculatus*)



King threadfin  
(*Polydactylus macrochir*)



Estuary cod  
(*Epinephelus coioides*)



Dusky flathead  
(*Platycephalus fuscus*)



Sand flathead  
(*Platycephalus arenarius*)



Spotted grunter (javelin fish)  
(*Pomadasys kaakan*)



Swallow tailed dart  
(*Trachinotus botla*)



Yellowfin bream  
(*Acanthopagrus australis*)



Tarwine  
(*Rhabdosargus sarba*)



Sand (summer) whiting  
(*Sillago ciliata*)



Winter (diver) whiting  
(*Sillago maculata*)



Tailor  
(*Pomatomus saltatrix*)



Mulloway  
(*Argyrosomus japonicus*)



Grass sweetlip  
(*Lethrinus laticaudis*)



Black kingfish  
(*Rachycentron canadus*)



Grey mackerel  
(*Scomberomorus semifasciatus*)



School mackerel  
(*Scomberomorus queenslandicus*)



Spotted mackerel  
(*Scomberomorus munroi*)



Sea Mullet  
(*Mugil cephalus*)



Golden trevally  
(*Gnathanodon speciosus*)