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The future for recreational fishing Final report of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

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Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee. (1991), *The future for recreational fishing Final report of the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee*. Fisheries Department Perth Western Australia., Perth. Report No 41.

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The future for
**RECREATIONAL
FISHING**

Final report
of the
Recreational Fishing
Advisory Committee

Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee
Western Australia
May 1991

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1. Executive summary

The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (RFAC) recognised right from the start of its two-year review that its major task was to chart a responsible course for recreational fishing well into the future.

Short-term, expedient solutions were never part of the committee's brief in dealing with recreational fishing's key issues and problems. It recognised that the ultimate goal was to establish principles for the long-term management of recreational fishing and develop a flexible strategy capable of evolving with community and conservation needs.

One of the committee's first aims was to identify what recreational fishing actually means to Western Australia's estimated 300 000 fishers. In its major discussion paper the RFAC posed the question: What is recreational fishing?, and went on to offer its own definitive view:

To aim to catch a feed for oneself and family and, for a variety of personal reasons, to enjoy the experience along the way.

This definition attracted strong support from fishers and the wider community because it was seen by many to capture the true spirit of recreational fishing.

The committee also set down what it believed was **not** the role of recreational fishers - to sell fish for financial gain; to aim to catch hundreds of fish at a time; and to waste fish from hauls which go way beyond personal needs.

Emphasis on conservation and equity in catch sharing was at the heart of the committee's investigations into developing strategies for the future management of important recreational fish stocks.

They were also key factors in deliberations on such vital issues as bag limits, trip limits and gear controls, and in the development of strategies for education, research and enforcement.

In its discussion paper, which was widely circulated and publicised, the committee promoted public debate on the merits of imposing a general recreational fishing licence as the best means of raising revenue to fund the future needs of recreational fishing. It emphasised that without a firm funding base there was little likelihood of attracting adequate finance for implementing a proper management strategy.

The licensing proposal, as envisaged, certainly attracted strong public reaction, but the committee eventually decided that there was insufficient community support to introduce such a system at this stage. However, it believes that general licensing may eventually be the only practical method of fulfilling recreational fishing funding needs. Based on overseas experience in the U.S.A. and Canada, this strategy is likely to be far more acceptable once the benefits from management programs for recreational fishing are perceived by the public.

As an immediate solution to funding problems the committee has recommended restructuring the existing licence system and introducing fees for high value and heavily fished species such as prawns, crabs, abalone and trout, all of which demand intensive management. Revenue from this species licensing system should be raised at state level and go into a trust fund exclusively dedicated to the integrated management of recreational fishing.

However, the committee also urges the state to seek a share of the Commonwealth sales tax levied on fishing tackle and other associated fishing equipment. It believes strongly that this would be the most equitable method of providing money to manage recreational angling.

It is envisaged that a system similar to the Wallop-Breaux amendments to the Federal Aid in Sports Fish Restoration Act USA, as outlined in the licensing and funding section of this report, provides a clear funding alternative. This concept would need to be pursued with the Federal Government.

In this report the committee has identified education and research as the most urgent priorities for funding.

In its final recommendations on bag limits, the committee has acknowledged strong public opposition to its proposal for a trip limit to curb excessive catches and fish selling by amateurs (shamateurs). For this and other reasons the committee decided against recommending a trip limit, and opted instead for tighter daily bag limits on some key species as a frontline conservation strategy.

There was wide public support for the committee's proposed concept of four categories of daily bag limits, and the revised limits remain within this structure.

The committee believes that its bag limit recommendations represent a fair and reasonable catch for all fishers, but also clearly acknowledge the need to conserve fish stocks for the future. It warns that failure to adopt its bag limit strategies, gear exclusion proposals in key recreational fishing areas, and other recommendations embracing the conservation ethic will result in further depletion of fish stocks. Further, it will lead to increasing polarisation of views within the community and conflict between resource users as fisheries come under increasing pressure.

Proposals for the creation of a permanent central recreational fishing advisory committee, supported by statewide regional committees, are seen as crucial in providing an evolving policy for recreational fishing.

An independent economic survey carried out by Professor R.K. Lindner and Dr P.B. McLeod of Economic Research Associates indicated that WA fishers spend between \$200 and \$415 million on their pastime each year.

On this basis, the value of recreational fishing is about two-thirds of the landed catch value of the state's commercial fisheries.

The needs identified in the committee's report must be heeded if the real and potential value and importance of recreational fishing is to be recognised and maintained.

The committee would like to pay a tribute to the West Australian public for its thoughtful and positive response during the entire review process. There was strong attendance at 27 public meetings throughout the state and the

committee received a total of 1448 public submissions, including 442 written submissions from individuals and various clubs, associations and authorities. Additionally, many more submissions to the regional committees established to assist in the consulting process added to the committee's overall knowledge.

Many of the written submissions were outstanding in content and were of great help to the committee in its final deliberations.

The committee has chosen to quote from some of these submissions in Section 4 to illustrate the wide range of thinking and interest shown by the public.

As chairman of the RFAC I would also like to thank committee members for their untiring efforts during this exhaustive two-year review. I believe they have made a highly significant contribution towards achieving that ultimate goal mentioned earlier: the development of a proper management strategy for recreational fishing.

Finally, the committee acknowledges the foresight shown by the West Australian Government, and especially the Fisheries Minister Gordon Hill, for fostering this major review. It has led to a recognition throughout Australia that WA has led the way in moves to secure the future of recreational fishing.



Peter Rogers
Chairman
Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee
May 1991

2. Summary of recommendations

1. Resource Sharing

☐ **Recommendation 1 - Compensation for changes in resource share**

Any imposed change in resource share between commercial and recreational fishers should not occur before a full evaluation involving consultation between the two user groups.

Where an adjustment of commercial fishing effort is necessary and appropriate, the preferred option for changing the resource share is the buyback of commercial fishing licences as a means of compensation.

☐ **Recommendation 2 - Priorities for buyback**

As a priority, the salmon, herring and southern estuarine fisheries should be fully evaluated to determine whether there should be a shift in the resource share in favour of recreational fishing.

☐ **Recommendation 3 - Gear exclusions for key areas**

Gear exclusions should be used as a strategy to manage fishing, and provide fishing diversity in the following defined key recreational fishing areas:

Rowley Shoals	Cockburn Sound
Roebuck Bay	Shoalwater Bay Islands Marine Park
Dampier Archipelago	Peel-Harvey Estuary
Ningaloo Marine Park	Leschenault Estuary
Shark Bay	Geographe Bay
Abrolhos Islands	Hardy Inlet - Flinders Bay (Augusta)
Champion Bay	Hamelin Bay - Deepdene - Cosy
Jurien Bay	Corner
Yanchep - Two Rocks area of	Walpole-Nornalup Estuary
Direction Bank	Oyster Harbour
Marmion Marine Park	Bremer Estuary
Rottne Island	Stokes Inlet
Swan-Canning Estuary	Esperance Bay

☐ **Recommendation 4 - Trawling management in the South-West**

The committee noted that a scientific study has already begun on the effects of trawling in Geographe Bay, Comet Bay and other inshore waters.

If the social, economic and environmental benefits of closing these areas to trawling are shown to outweigh the benefits of the commercial fishery, then trawling should be excluded from these areas.

☐ **Recommendation 5 - Water catchment fishing**

There is a strong case for opening some West Australian Water Authority (WAWA) water catchment dams to artificial lure and fly fishing for trout under strictly controlled conditions.

A trial program, under the joint auspices of the Fisheries Department and WAWA, should be initiated in one of these closed areas to look at trout fishing and water quality. Trout fishing groups and any relevant local authorities should be involved.

☐ **Recommendation 6 - Specific purpose recreational fishing dams**

Private and corporate sponsorship should be sought for the construction of specific purpose recreational fishing dams in the South-West.

2. Management Rules

☐ **Recommendation 7 - Trip limits**

Trip limits should not be implemented at this time because of the impracticality of enforcement, perceived inequities and significant public opposition.

There should be possession-by-weight or special bag limits in areas with a high conservation value (e.g. Ningaloo Marine Park), and their use should be further evaluated.

☐ **Recommendation 8 - Daily bag limits**

There was wide public support for the system of grouping daily bag limits into four main categories. Therefore these categories should be adhered to when making further revisions. In cases where a species needs specific protection it may be placed in a special conservation category. Stocked fish also come under a separate category.

The committee recommends that:

Category 1 - "PRIZE FISH"

The bag limit be reduced to four fish of each species per fisher per day, instead of five as proposed. Additionally a mixed bag limit of eight fish per fisher per day should apply in this category.

In the case of mulloway, the committee recommends a two-tiered bag limit consisting of three fish between 45cm and 70cm, and one only breeding fish of over 70cm.

Category 2 - "REEF FISH"

The bag limit be reduced to a mixed bag of eight fish per fisher per day, instead of 10.

Category 3 - "TABLE FISH"

A bag limit of 20 of each species per fisher per day be introduced.

Category 4 - "BREAD AND BUTTER FISH"

This category be extended to cover all small fish, except nominated baitfish. A daily bag limit of 40 of each species per fisher be introduced.

☐ **Recommendation 9 - Size limits**

The committee's original strategy of removing legal minimum lengths from Category 4 species should be adhered to.

Size limits should also be increased for flounder (to 25cm from 23cm); red emperor (to 41cm from 28cm); and mullet (to 45cm from 33cm, and for trophy fish to 70cm); pink snapper (a universal size of 41cm, eliminating a 28cm separate size for the South Coast). All cod of the genera *Epinephelus* (e.g. potato cod and Queensland groper) should have a maximum legal size of 50kg. Cod larger than this should be returned alive to the water.

The committee also considers that prawn fishing is best managed through closed seasons, and size limits on prawns should be removed.

☐ **Recommendation 10 - Gear should be in keeping with the recreational fishing ethic**

Recreational fishers should be permitted to use only gear that is in keeping with the recreational fishing ethic of catching a feed for oneself and family, and for a variety of reasons enjoying the experience along the way.

☐ **Recommendation 11 - Angling methods**

Acceptable: Maximum of two attended rods or handlines per angler from the shore. No more than three sets of hooks as end tackle. No restriction on rod or handline numbers per boat. Maximum of one attended setline (or drop or longline) with three sets of hooks per boat.

Unacceptable: Unattended lines (including drop, set and long).

☐ **Recommendation 12 - Spearfishing**

The committee has decided that there are no compelling reasons to ban the use of compressed-air spearfishing throughout the state.

However, in key conservation areas, or for some high-conservation value species, there may be a need for area prohibitions (i.e. gear exclusion which would prevent spearfishing).

☐ **Recommendation 13 - Estuaries closed to netting**

All estuaries should be totally closed to amateur haul and gill netting within three years.

☐ **Recommendation 14 - Mullet netting in the ocean**

Haul netting for sea mullet is recognised as a popular pastime in some inshore marine areas, and represents little or no threat to other fish stocks. Therefore fishers should be allowed to target mullet in the ocean with 57mm (2 1/4") mesh haul nets.

RECOMMENDED BAG LIMITS

Category 1 - "PRIZE FISH"

Four fish of each species per fisher per day, mixed bag limit of 8 fish.
Legal minimum sizes apply.

Barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*)
Cobia (*Rachycentron canadus*)
Cods (Serranidae family). (*Epinephelus* spp, max. weight 50 kg to apply)
Coral trout (*Plectropomus* spp)
Dolphinfish (mahi mahi) (*Coryphaena hippurus*)
Jewfish, Westralian (*Glaucosoma hebraicum*)
Mackerels (*Scomberomorus* spp, *Acanthocybium solandri*, *Grammatorcynus bicarinatus*)
Mulloway (*Argyrosomus hololepidotus*) and black jewfish (northern mulloway - *Protonibea diacanthus*)
Queenfish (*Scomberoides commersonnianus*)
Salmon, Australian (*Arripus truttaceus*)
Samson fish (*Seriola hippos*)
Sharks (all spp)
Tuna, Southern bluefin (*Thunnus maccoyii*)
Yellowtail kingfish (*Seriola lalandi*)

Category 2 - "REEF FISH"

A mixed bag limit of 8 fish per fisher per day. Legal minimum sizes apply.

Emperor, red (*Lutjanus sebae*)
Groper, baldchin (*Choerodon rubescens*)
Snapper, pink (*Chrysophrys auratus*)
Snapper, north-west (*Lethrinus* spp)
Snapper, queen (blue morwong - *Nemadactylus douglasii*)
Snapper, red (*Centroberyx gerrardi*)

Category 3 - "TABLE FISH"

20 of each species per fisher per day. Legal minimum sizes apply.

Bream, black and yellowfin (*Acanthopagrus butcheri*, *A. australis*)
Cobbler (*Cnidoglanis macrocephalus*)
Flathead and flounder (combined) (*Platycephalus* spp, and *Pseudorhombus* spp)
Leatherjackets (Monacanthidae family)
Mangrove jack and fingermark bream (*Lutjanus argentimaculatus*, and *L. russelli*)
Pike and snook (combined) (*Sphyræna novaehollandiae*, *S. obtusata*, *Dinolestes lewini*)
Skipjack trevally (*Pseudocaranx* spp)
Tailor (*Pomatomus saltatrix*)
Tarwhine (*Rhabdosargus sarba*)
Threadfin salmon and bluenose salmon (*Polydactylus* spp)
Whiting, king george (*Sillaginodes punctata*)

Category 4 - "BREAD AND BUTTER FISH"

40 fish of each species per fisher per day. No minimum sizes in this category.

All WA fish species not covered in categories 1, 2 & 3, or under special bag limits are included in Category 4. The only exceptions are baitfish of the sardine and anchovy families, Clupeidae and Engraulididae. Popular species include:

Australian herring (*Arripis georgianus*)
Garfish (*Hyporhamphus* spp)
Western sand and school whiting (*Sillago* spp)
Yellowtail (*Trachurus* spp)
Blue mackerel (*Scomber australasicus*)
Yelloweye mullet (*Aldrichetta forsteri*) and Sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*)

Shellfish

The daily bag limit for prawns should remain at 9 litres per licensed fisher. This bag limit should also apply to cherabin.

A two-litre daily bag limit should be introduced for all edible sea shells including cockles, pipis, clams, and similar species.

Special conservation category

Western blue groper (*Achoerodus gouldii*) - bag limit 1

Stocked fish

Trout, brown and rainbow (*Salmo trutta* and *Onchorhynchus mykiss*) - bag limit 10

☐ **Recommendation 15 - Recreational set gill nets unacceptable**

Recreational set gill nets should be banned in all West Australian waters.

☐ **Recommendation 16 - No commercial gear permitted**

The use of commercial netting gear by recreational fishers should be totally banned. This includes purse-seine nets, demersal and pelagic trawls, and lampara nets.

☐ **Recommendation 17 - Fish traps, dredges, octopus and crab pots**

Crab pots should be banned in all waters south of 26°30'S. Fish traps and dredges should be banned in all WA waters. Unbaited octopus and cobbler pots should remain legal in prescribed waters.

☐ **Recommendation 18 - Closed waters and seasons**

Closed areas and closed seasons are endorsed as management measures, and the committee urges that they be regarded as a front-line policy to prevent the over-exploitation of fisheries. The legal requirement should remain that all notices regarding closures be published in the Government Gazette. Additionally, they should be widely promoted through the media, and sign posted where practical.

☐ **Recommendation 19 - Recreational rules to apply to charter boats**

The same recreational fishing rules should apply to charter boats as apply to the rest of the population.

All boats on charter should be subject to all recreational fishing rules, especially those defining bag limits and forbidding the sale of recreationally caught fish.

☐ **Recommendation 20 - Charter licences to be introduced**

All charter boats should be specifically licensed for the sole purpose of fishing for charter.

☐ **Recommendation 21 - Charter catches to be monitored**

A catch monitoring system should be introduced on all recreational fishing charter boats.

☐ **Recommendation 22 - Aboriginal subsistence fishing**

All members of the community should be subject to the same recreational fishing rules, and the Fisheries Act should be amended to stipulate this.

Traditional tribal communities north of the 26th Parallel are the only groups who should be considered for exemption. The subsistence fishing rights of Aboriginal groups should be defined in full consultation with Aboriginal representatives.

☐ **Recommendation 23 - Professional fishing licence holders**

The Fisheries Act (1905) should be amended to clarify the recreational entitlement of licensed commercial fishers.

3. Access

☐ **Recommendation 24 - Code of practice for access**

A universal "code of practice" should be adopted to govern access to recreational fishing areas. The code should be based on common sense and courtesy and encompass the following points:

- Access through private property shall only be after obtaining permission from the landowner.
- Vehicular traffic must not deviate from defined roads, tracks etc. (ie. no "bush bashing").
- All rubbish to be either removed or deposited in facilities provided for that purpose.
- Gates to be left in the state found.
- No unauthorised camping at wells or stock watering facilities.
- All fire restrictions to be observed.
- No unauthorised discharging of firearms.
- No trees to be felled or vegetation cleared without permission.
- Access controls imposed by landholders shall be respected.
- Courtesy shall be extended to all other access users.

☐ **Recommendation 25 - Planning fishing access at new facilities**

All planning and construction organisations should formally consult with recreational fishing representatives to determine fishing access needs when

planning marinas, harbours, bridges, and similar facilities. These should also take into account the needs of disabled fishers.

4. Community Consultation

☐ **Recommendation 26 - Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee**

A new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee should be established to co-ordinate the management of recreational fishing throughout the state, and provide advice on recreational fishing issues to the Minister for Fisheries.

This committee should have three-year appointments and a rotating membership. Travel and administration costs should be met from recreational fishing management funds.

The committee should consist of:

- 1 chairperson (chief executive officer of the Fisheries Department or nominee)
- 3 regional representatives
- 4 ministerial appointments of people with expertise in the recreational fishing area.
- 2 WA Recreational and Sportfishing Council representatives
- 1 WA Fishing Industry Council representative.

☐ **Recommendation 27 - Regional liaison committees**

Regional liaison committees should be established in recreational fishing centres throughout the state to provide advice to the central committee and the Fisheries Department on local recreational fishing issues, and assist with fisheries community education programs.

The regional committees should comprise:

- 1 chairperson (regional co-ordinator - State Development)
- 1 commercial fishing industry representative,
- 2 WA Recreational and Sportfishing Council representatives.
- 6-10 community representatives.

5. Research

☐ **Recommendation 28 - Recreational fishing research program**

A scientific research program should be established within the Fisheries Research Division, exclusively for the management needs of recreational fishing.

Initially a research scientist and two technical officers should be appointed to work full-time in the program.

☐ **Recommendation 29 - Collation of past research information**

All available past research information on recreationally important species and fishing activity in WA should be collated, and published to serve as a basis for further studies.

☐ **Recommendation 30 - Information base and catch monitoring**

A recreational fishing information base and continuing system of data collection should be established. Recreational fishing clubs should be canvassed for assistance in this project.

☐ **Recommendation 31 - Fish population modelling**

Fish population modelling for key recreational species needs to be developed and resourced to assess the impact of fishing pressures on these stocks.

☐ **Recommendation 32 - Barramundi stock enhancement**

As a priority, aquaculture should be fully investigated as a method for enhancing wild barramundi stocks in the Kimberleys, particularly in Lakes Kununurra and Argyle.

☐ **Recommendation 33 - FADs, artificial reefs, stock enhancement**

Much more needs to be known about all these stock enhancement strategies before any scientific judgment can be made about their capacity to increase stocks of various recreational species.

While the committee endorses the concept of artificial reefs, it notes concerns that tyre constructions are known to leak toxic chemicals into the ocean such as poly-vinyl chlorides and PCB's. These effects should be fully investigated before more tyre constructions are approved.

☐ **Recommendation 34 - Fish tagging**

The committee recognises the educational and conservation value of tag and release activities for the large, robust species such as billfish. However, it considers random tagging of smaller species to be wasteful and of no scientific value.

Tagging should be encouraged, but be carried out only as part of a properly managed scientific research program. Recreational fishers should be encouraged to take part in such programs.

6. Community Education

☐ **Recommendation 35 - Community education officers**

Initially two full-time community education officers should be appointed to the Fisheries Department to further develop, implement and support community education programs.

☐ **Recommendation 36 - Community liaison officers**

A network of volunteer community liaison officers should be established to assist in community education programs, and recreational fisheries management.

☐ **Recommendation 37 - Community involvement in programs**

Fishing clubs and regional liaison committees should have a key role in community education programs.

☐ **Recommendation 38 - Fishing clinics**

Fishing clinics for anglers and divers, and as school activities, should be developed as a regular feature of community education programs throughout the state.

☐ **Recommendation 39 - Charter boat operators**

Charter boat operators and their clients need to be specifically targeted as part of any community education program.

☐ **Recommendation 40 - Education programs**

Specific education programs should be directed at identified target groups, or in specific fisheries or areas, to inform the community of fishing conservation rules and promote and encourage appropriate recreational fishing behaviour.

Priorities are: programs aimed at ethnic groups, particularly with reference to shellfish gathering and crabbing; programs for key conservation areas such as Ningaloo Marine Park; programs for the crab, tailor and abalone fisheries; and a general program to promote the new fishing rules introduced as a result of this report.

7. Enforcement

☐ **Recommendation 41 - Appointment of North-West fisheries officers**

More fisheries officers should be appointed to supervise the unmanaged recreational fishery north of latitude 26°S.

☐ **Recommendation 42 - Volunteer community liaison officers**

The network of voluntary community liaison officers mentioned in Recommendation 36 should also be used to increase management profile on the beach front.

The committee emphasises that volunteers should not be seen as "Honorary Fisheries Wardens". Rather, they should play a crucial community education role, and assist local fisheries officers by providing information and advice to fellow fishers on the beach front, accompanying patrols, giving talks to local angling clubs, school groups and other community groups, and organising

or participating in local events such as fishing competitions, clinics and displays to raise community awareness of recreational fishing issues.

☐ **Recommendation 43 - Bag limit fines according to offence**

Fines for catches over the daily bag limit should be graduated according to the severity of the offence, i.e. a base fine, plus a penalty for every fish over the bag limit.

☐ **Recommendation 44 - Fines linked to inflation**

Fines for fisheries offences should be linked to the Consumer Price Index through a unit value penalty system.

☐ **Recommendation 45 - On-the-spot fines**

The power to impose on-the-spot-fines should be included in the Fisheries Act and the value of an on-the-spot fine system needs to be investigated, and implemented if found worthwhile.

☐ **Recommendation 46 - Increased penalties for illegal fish selling**

There should be a higher level of penalties, similar to those applicable in commercial limited entry fisheries, for the sellers and buyers of all illegally sold fish.

☐ **Recommendation 47 - Fish Watch**

There should be a "Fish Watch" system established to enable the community to report fishing and selling offences and other acts affecting the aquatic environment. All reports should be logged and made available to the new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee.

8. The Environment

☐ **Recommendation 48 - Environmental impact reviews in aquatic areas**

The Environmental Protection Authority and other management authorities should be formally required to consult with the Fisheries Department during the environmental impact review process where proposals may impact upon the aquatic environment.

☐ **Recommendation 49 - Protection of fish habitats and nurseries**

A system of reserves for fish habitat protection should be implemented under the Fisheries Act for key fish nursery and habitat areas.

☐ **Recommendation 50 - Aquatic pollution**

Catchment management control agencies should involve fisheries managers and recreational water users in the process of integrated catchment management.

☐ **Recommendation 51 - Community education**

Pollution created by fishers should be a major focus of recreational fishing community education programs.

Emphasis should be on the following:

- careless use of offroad vehicles.
- dumping of litter on beaches and river banks.
- polluting the coastline and inshore waters with discarded objects such as bottles, tins, plastic bags and nylon fishing line.

☐ **Recommendation 52 - Bait packaging**

The government should initiate the development of a national strategy to eliminate non-biodegradable bait packaging, particularly at the repacking and retail ends of the market.

Additionally, the further use of non-biodegradable bait packaging should be actively discouraged at a state level through either an incentive or disincentive scheme.

☐ **Recommendation 53 - Dumping at sea**

The Fisheries Department, and other marine management authorities, should continue to play an active role in the elimination of oil and rubbish dumping at sea.

☐ **Recommendation 54 - Discharge of ballast water**

The committee recognises that the problem of introduced organisms is already under consideration federally by the Australian Fisheries Council, but urges that action be taken to ensure that ships discharge "foreign" ballast water well away from inshore areas.

9. Licensing

☐ **Recommendation 55 - No general recreational fishing licence**

No general fishing licence should be introduced at this stage in the development of recreational fishing management.

☐ **Recommendation 56 - Extended licence categories**

The existing recreational fishing licences required for rock lobster, netting and marron should be extended as follows:

Rock lobster	\$20
Net fishing	\$15
Marron	\$15
South-West freshwater angling (trout, redfin perch, freshwater cobbler)	\$15
Abalone	\$15
Prawns and crabs	\$10

☐ **Recommendation 57 - Trust fund for fees**

All revenue collected from recreational fishing licences should be placed in a special Trust Account, dedicated to recreational fishing management in WA.

☐ **Recommendation 58 - Licence issuing**

Recreational fishing licences should be issued for a minimum cost, and through a maximum number of outlets.

The committee considers that Australia Post appears to offer the most cost effective and widespread service now available through its electronic counter service facility.

☐ **Recommendation 59 - Funding priorities**

The committee has identified that education and research should receive first priorities for funding.

☐ **Recommendation 60 - Stock enhancement sponsorship**

Corporate sponsorship should be canvassed for artificial reef construction, fishing platforms, fishing dams, and other stock enhancement programs.

☐ **Recommendation 61 - Alternative funding**

The West Australian Government should present a case through the Australian Fisheries Council for Commonwealth funding of recreational fisheries management.

3. Introduction

Recreational fishing has grown rapidly to become a hugely popular pastime in Western Australia. Upwards of 300,000 people enjoy the relaxation and rewards of fishing as part of their leisure. However, more than 60 per cent of their effort is concentrated in a narrow band of inshore coastal and estuarine waters between Augusta and Jurien Bay. Farther afield, holiday locations such as Kalbarri, Shark Bay, Exmouth, and Esperance attract thousands more anglers every year.

In many of these popular areas, anglers must also compete with long-standing commercial fishing operations and other forms of fishing such as amateur netting.

The reasons why people fish, and how they fish, are changing as society changes. What was once primarily a food gathering exercise to stock the family fridge is now increasingly a high-cost recreational and sporting pursuit.

There is evidence to suggest that increasing pressure applied by the sheer numbers of recreational fishers is threatening the future of some of the key recreational fishing species. It is also causing growing conflict between the various groups of competing fishers.

But the growing popularity of recreational fishing also generates millions of dollars in direct expenditure on tackle and bait, and helps fill hotels and holiday resorts up and down the state.

The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee considers that there is an urgent need for the community to recognise the true social and economic value of recreational fishing, and for the government to make crucial decisions about its future now.

It also believes that the time has come to consider changes in the available catch share between amateur and commercial fishers. Another vital issue is the protection of key fish habitats and nursery areas from further degradation and over-exploitation.

In January 1989 the West Australian Government initiated a major review on the future of recreational fishing in this state.

The decision to carry out the review was a direct result of the government's recognition that a long-term strategy for the management of recreational fishing should be developed.

The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee was appointed by the current Minister for Fisheries, Hon. Gordon Hill JP MLA, in April 1989. Formation of the committee was advertised throughout WA during February 1989, and applications were invited from interested members of the community. Committee members were selected to form as broad a representation as possible of interest groups from both city and country areas.

As well as representatives of angling and diving interests, government departments involved in marine management, a nominee of the commercial fishing industry, and three interested community members were also appointed to the committee.

The full committee was:

Chairman

Mr Peter Rogers, Director, Fisheries Management Policy, Fisheries Department of WA.

Community appointments

Associate Professor Jennifer Browne, North Beach

Mr Ron Durell, North Beach

Mr Max Meade, Gairdner River

WA Recreational and Sportfishing Council

Mr Angus Horwood

Mr Brian Fearn

WA Fishing Industry Council

Mr Guy Leyland

Department of Conservation and Land Management

Mr Greg Pobar

Waterways Commission

Mr Ian Parker

Dr Rod Lenanton, Principal Fisheries Research Scientist, West Australian Marine Research Laboratories, was technical adviser to the committee.

Mr Ross Cusack was editorial adviser to the committee.

Mr Noel Moore, Mr Phil Bruce and Mr Bill Benbow acted as Executive Officers to the committee during the term of its operation.

Terms of reference

The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee's terms of reference were:

- To identify and review the key strategies for the management and enhancement of recreational fishing within Western Australia.
- In consultation with the Fisheries Department to identify research, enforcement and educational priorities for recreational fishing.
- To identify appropriate communication and community-based consultative mechanisms for the management of recreational fishing.

The recreational fisheries for rock lobster and marron are dealt with by separate advisory committees. Consequently, specific issues affecting these fisheries have not been reconsidered by the RFAC, and are not dealt with in this report.

Process of review

At its first meeting in July 1989 the committee decided that its initial priority was to identify as many recreational fishing issues as possible. It also sought the creation of regional committees in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Gascoyne, Central West, Mid-West, Goldfields-Esperance, South-West, and South Coast areas.

The committee resolved to produce a major discussion paper which would set down all the issues it identified and suggest strategies to deal with them.

The paper, "The Future for Recreational Fishing - issues for community discussion", was launched by Fisheries Minister Gordon Hill in March 1990 and released for wide public debate. A 24-page summary of the 112-page paper was also published to highlight the main issues involved.

The discussion paper was publicised strongly through the print and electronic media and by direct mail, with the specific aim of attracting written submissions on all the key issues.

In the next stage of its review, the committee arranged public meetings throughout the state so that interested people could air their opinions on a face-to-face basis.

In all 27 meetings were held from Kununurra in the north down to Esperance in the south, with RFAC representatives in attendance.

Other specialised groups such as angling clubs also held meetings attended by advisory committee members.

Nearly all the public meetings were well attended and members of the community seized the opportunity to contribute to the debate on such crucial issues as recreational licensing and management rules.

The statewide meetings also set the scene for a day-long recreational fishing forum held at the West Australian Cricket Association Ground in October 1990.

The forum, planned by the RFAC as the major event of the seven-month period set down for public debate on its discussion paper, featured addresses by a broad range of prominent speakers. A highlight was an outstanding videotaped address by Professor Carl Walters, of the University of British Columbia in Canada. Professor Walters, who has worked with researchers at the WA Marine Research Laboratories, outlined what has happened to recreational fisheries in his home city of Vancouver and drew parallels with the situation in Western Australia. More than 200 members of the public attended the forum.

When the public discussion period ended, the committee had received a total of 1448 submissions. An overview of these follows in Section 4.

4. Overview of public submissions

The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee was impressed by the huge public response to its plea for written submissions on the issues and strategies outlined in its discussion paper. There were hundreds of thoughtful and constructive comments throughout the 442 written submissions.

The committee analysed in detail all submissions received, and a separate statistical report has been prepared for publication which gives a breakdown of responses to each of the strategies originally proposed in the committee's discussion paper.

Though key issues such as funding and licensing, bag limits, trip limits and enforcement were to the forefront of public opinion, there was also a great deal of helpful debate on other important topics.

Regional committees set up throughout the state also contributed enormously to the overall flow of information, both from their own submissions and their capacity to deal with local written and pro forma submissions.

The central committee received three types of submissions from the public:

1. Written	442
2. Pro forma submissions distributed by the recreational fishing sub-committees, angling clubs and others. These allowed for:	
(a) comments on main issues	172
(b) general comments on all issues	30
(c) more specific general comments	130
3. Survey of key issues (from public meetings	674
TOTAL	1 448

The submissions were separated into the following categories to identify their source:

1. Written submissions	
Individuals	334
Angling clubs	37
Diving clubs	6
Other clubs (boating, yachting etc)	21
Government departments/authorities	7
Shires	10
Tourist bureaus	5
Regional recreational fishing advisory committees	15
Petitions	7
TOTAL	442

2. Pro forma submissions	
(a) comments on main issues	172 individuals
(b) general comments on all issues	4 angling clubs, 26 individuals
(c) more specific general comments	130 individuals
TOTAL	332

3. Survey of key issues

The following is a summary of comment drawn from the submissions on the various issues and strategies:

The Environment

Water quality was a prime concern among writers who commented on environmental matters. They focussed on increasing salinity in inland waters and degradation caused by domestic, industrial and agricultural runoff into streams, rivers, estuaries and the ocean.

Other important matters raised were:

- The possibility of introducing biodegradable bait packaging and bait bands.
- Widespread littering, pollution and environmental damage caused by shore and boat fishers, campers and offroad drivers (with pleas for on-the-spot fines and high profile education campaigns).
- Protection of fish habitats and nurseries, seagrass beds and the bottom environment generally (especially from trawling). Submissions emphasised the need for the Environmental Protection Authority, the Department of Conservation and Land Management and other management agencies to consult with the Fisheries Department when setting environmental impact guidelines on matters affecting fish nursery areas.

Though there was not a high overall response to environmental issues, there was clear support (and negligible disagreement) with strategies outlined in the discussion paper.

Resource Sharing

There was wide-ranging comment on the strategies identified, with emphasis on support for licence buyback schemes in appropriate fisheries to change the resource share in favour of recreational fishers.

There was reasonable support for a proposal to establish priority recreational fishing areas, though some respondents saw problems in dealing with the equitable distribution of fish surpluses.

Some submissions urged that part-time professional salmon fishermen be phased out and the fishery be made entirely recreational.

Other comments of interest:

- Pleas for more boat launching ramps between Hillarys and Fremantle.
- A request for the construction of a dam specifically for recreational fishing in the South-West.
- Commercial fishers should contribute more to the management of their fisheries.
- Strong opposition to trawling in inshore waters, especially in the Geographe Bay and Mandurah areas.

Fishing Access

Most references were directed to either support for a code of practice or concern about gradual reduction of access to tracks, and the impact of beach closures to offroad vehicles.

The closure issue was raised by experienced fishing club anglers - especially those who travel by 4WD and possibly seek regular and wider access to tracks and the coast than most members of the public.

There was limited response on the issue of access, but the general thrust of comments indicated solid support for the committee's strategies.

Research

There was virtually no argument with the research strategies spelled out in the discussion paper.

Respondents readily acknowledged that there was an urgent need for a proper scientifically based research program on key recreational species.

They supported the establishment of a recreational fishing information base, and fishing club and association members signalled a strong willingness to help in such a project.

Submissions confirmed that club members would be keen to take part in creel surveys and supply catch information, including that from club records.

Construction of artificial reefs emerged as important to anglers, who have obviously been impressed by the success of the car tyre reef constructed off Dunsborough.

However, there were relatively few references to the importance of aquaculture as a viable method of stock enhancement.

Most references to tagging sportfish indicated that fishers would be quite prepared to take part in properly managed tagging programs, as suggested by the committee. Keen anglers who belong to sportfishing groups which favour catch-and-release (for example, ANSA WA) fully supported the committee's view that tagging should not be carried out in isolation on a random basis.

Many writers urged that recreational fisheries research be the No.1 funding priority. However, several others made the point that existing government funding allocated to research should continue even if extra money is raised for these purposes from licensing or other sources.

Management Rules

There was an enormous response right across the range of management rules, especially in the key areas of bag, size and trip limits, and fishing methods.

Those who expressed an opinion on exemptions under the Fisheries Act were virtually unanimous in saying that all recreational fishers should have equal rights. They said that traditional methods and fishing rights should be continued in situations where Aborigines fish at a subsistence level primarily to provide food for their entire community. Otherwise they should be subject to the same rules as other fishers.

There was also a clear majority view that holders of professional fishermen's licences (PFLs) should abide by recreational fishing rules when fishing recreationally.

Closed waters and closed seasons were supported as management tools, but writers emphasised the need for wide publicity and signposting to keep the public fully informed.

Bag Limits

The committee's proposal for four categories of bag limits drew overwhelming support in principle, but some key groups and experienced individual anglers suggested important changes to each of the four categories.

The most common objection was about including Westralian jewfish as part of the mixed bag in Category 2. All the objectors said jewfish should remain separate in Category 1.

There was a strong push to add cobia, queenfish, samson fish and yellowtail kingfish to Category 1.

Many submissions said that the proposed daily bag limits were too generous, especially in Categories 3 and 4.

Size Limits

Though there was support for removing minimum legal lengths from Category 4 small fish, quite a few submissions urged their retention. Writers generally agreed with the proposition that minimum sizes on small fish were useless as a conservation measure, especially as they were virtually impossible to enforce.

In the other categories the most recurrent themes were to increase the legal length of mulloway (to 50 cm), pink snapper (to a universal 41 cm) and flounder (to 25 cm), and to introduce a minimum size for barramundi (50 cm).

Trip Limits

This proposal brought a strong response with submission opinions roughly equally divided. However, nearly all those in favour wanted some kind of qualification to the committee's suggestion for a trip limit equal to two days'

daily bag limit. Many submissions (particularly from fishing clubs) thought that two days was too harsh and asked for three, four and even five days. There was support from some key angling groups for a possession-by-weight limit, with suggestions for a ceiling of between 30 and 70 kg of processed fillets.

The most common objection among those who opposed a trip limit was that it would be discriminatory against once-a-year fishers from country areas.

Opponents also claimed that trip limits would be unenforceable and penalise the majority to punish a minority. Further, they would not stop shamateur fish sales and might well hurt tourism in key areas because fishers would feel that long-distance trips were no longer worthwhile.

Fishing Methods

There were widely contrasting degrees of response across this range of issues, with opinions on netting and compressed air spearfishing to the fore.

Though some submissions urged that there should not be too much regulation in the area of tackle use, most respondents put the view that rod and reel and handline should be the only acceptable recreational line fishing methods.

Some writers objected to fishers using up to eight rods at a time in some areas (particularly the Swan River) and urged that there be a limit of two rods per fisher. There was reasonable support for a maximum of three sets of hooks as terminal tackle.

Banning the use of long lines, set lines and fish traps was strongly supported, and many submissions urged a limit of one drop line per boat.

Compressed Air Spearfishing

Opinion was clearly divided on whether spearfishing with compressed air should remain a legitimate recreational activity. Nor was it conclusive, with only 40 per cent of respondents considering it an issue.

Proponents argued that compressed air divers were more selective about target species. Opponents said it diminished fish stocks close to reefs, gave divers an unfair advantage and encouraged excessive catches.

A common theme of those in favour of compressed air spearing was that that all divers were bound by bag limit constraints, so what did it matter how fish were caught?

What difference did it make if a compressed air diver achieved his bag limit more quickly, or efficiently, than a free diver or line fisher?

Amateur Netting

Netting proved to be a lively issue, with a strong push for a ban in all estuaries, rivers and inshore waters coming from leading angling groups and many individuals.

Those who opposed netting saw it as unsporting, indiscriminate and not in the true spirit of recreational fishing.

On the other hand, there was considerable support for netting in inshore marine waters, especially for non-angling species such as mullet.

Enforcement

There was solid support throughout the submissions for the committee's moves to stamp out fish selling and shamateurism by "recreational" fishers.

"Hit the shamateurs" was a recurrent theme, with quite a few respondents urging the introduction of higher penalties similar to those applicable in the state's key commercial fisheries. These also allow for confiscation of catches, boats, cars and freezers.

It was also made clear that buyers of amateur-caught fish should be hit just as hard as sellers.

On-the-spot fines and unit value penalty systems linked to cost-of-living rates received solid backing, as did the introduction of volunteer community liaison officers. Fishing clubs offered to suggest suitable volunteer candidates from within their memberships.

There was obvious and virtually unanimous backing for the appointment of more full-time Fisheries officers in key areas, especially the Kimberley and Pilbara.

Writers also supported the approach that proper enforcement was not just about penalties and restrictions – it was about providing a visible presence as a deterrent, and educating the public to encourage compliance.

There was a worthwhile suggestion for a "Fishwatch" system whereby people could phone their local Fisheries office on a toll-free number to inform inspectors of fishing misdemeanours.

Charter Boat Fishing

The submissions gave unequivocal backing to the proposal that charter boat operators must be subject to the same rules as recreational fishers at all times.

They said operators should not be able to use their clients to catch fish for them to sell, and should not be selling any part of the charter catch in any event.

However, individual charter operators put a case for allowing willing clients to catch fish for sale on the basis that such an arrangement could reduce the overall charter fee.

Recreational Fishing Licence

Licensing drew by far the most comment of any issue and there was a clear weighting of opinion against the introduction of a general recreational fishing licence.

Opponents came out strongly against such a licence and the case put by those who supported it was weakened considerably by a wide range of qualifications and provisos.

Fishers made it clear that any funds raised should go into a trust fund dedicated to recreational fishing. However, there was much doubt and

disbelief that any government (now or later) would resist using such funds for other purposes.

Many people were against general licensing for a range of reasons—especially because they believed it would be a further infringement of their personal freedom. It was also seen as being impractical and unenforceable.

Some submissions urged that funding for recreational fishing should come from general revenue or from a levy on sales tax generated by the Commonwealth.

Advisory and Regional Committees

There was majority support for the establishment of a permanent Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee to oversee the future management and well-being of recreational fishing. The formation of continuing regional committees to deal with local issues was also backed.

Some respondents opposed this path on the ground of cost and said that the Fisheries Department could undertake the administrative and operational matters associated with recreational fishing.

Community Education Programs

There was general acceptance of an urgent need for proper recreational fishing education programs involving the community.

Submissions pointed to widespread ignorance of the rules and negative attitudes, especially among ethnic fishers, as a major social and management problem. They urged specific education programs aimed at bringing about an attitude change among various ethnic groups, and emphasised that a strong education theme was a far more positive option than increased restrictions and harsher penalties for infringements.

Freshwater Fishing Dams

The written submission from the WA Trout and Freshwater Angling Association included an excellent suggestion for enhancing freshwater angling.

It sought the building of a large freshwater dam in the South-West to be used exclusively for trout fishing. This proposal has been addressed in Section 5.1 under "Water catchment fishing".

Kimberley submissions indicated strong support for the concept of stocking Lakes Kununurra and Argyle with barramundi or other species suitable for recreational fishing.

5. Issues and recommendations

5.1 Resource Sharing

Fisheries management policies are as much about controlling the relative available catch share between recreational and commercial fishers - and within groups of fishers - as they are about management for sustaining fish stocks.

A direct consequence of ever-increasing recreational fishing pressure, particularly on inshore finfish species, is that individual stocks can be seriously depleted and local catch rates reduced. The quality of fishing will decline and in some extreme circumstances such pressure can lead to breeding stock failure and collapse of individual fisheries.

Future management policies for recreational fishing must take into account continuing population growth and increasing leisure activity, leading to more people becoming involved in fishing.

In a perfect world, the overall sustainable yields and exploitation of all individual fisheries could be controlled to benefit and meet the needs of all the community, including those who buy fish for consumption.

But realistically the setting of such precise parameters, and the achievement of totally equitable catch sharing guidelines, is not possible. Neither would research nor a proper management framework using this approach be cost effective, at least in the foreseeable future.

This is particularly so for estuarine fish, species such as mullet and tailor, and other small stock fisheries in which recreational fishers take a significant part of the catch. These include Australian salmon, Australian herring, Westralian jewfish, snapper, crabs, barramundi, whiting, and mullet.

These are the species referred to as Group C and Group D category stocks in the committee's discussion paper.

For these reasons, the committee has sought to make practical recommendations on resource sharing which set the direction for changes in fisheries policy for the future enhancement of recreational fishing. These are outlined below.

Share Between Commercial and Recreational Fishers

The committee believes that recreational fishing in WA would be enhanced by a shift in resource share and management emphasis in specific fisheries.

There was strong public support for the committee's key strategy of compensating commercial fishers through a community-funded fishing

licence buyback scheme. In some fisheries this approach could allow recreational fishers a greater share of the available catch in the future.

Licence buyback was identified as being crucial in minimising conflict between commercial and recreational fishers as recreational fishing inevitably expands, accompanied by extra pressure on fish stocks.

Commercial fisheries identified in public submissions as requiring priority attention include Australian salmon, Australian herring, inshore beach net fisheries and southern estuarine fisheries.

In considering this issue the committee has become aware of an increasing body of legal opinion and case law extending proprietary rights, at least in nature, to commercial fishing licences. This is particularly so in fisheries which have transferable rights under particular limited entry licensed management programs.

Some members of the committee were of the view that the present construction of the Western Australian Fisheries Act 1905, did not allow for an arbitrary shift in resource share without compensation. Whether this is the case or not, the committee is aware that the Fisheries Adjustment Schemes Act 1987 provides an adequate framework for compensatory schemes within the commercial fishing industry.

The committee believes that unless commercial fishers are adequately compensated for reductions in access, the necessary adjustments in resource share will not easily occur. In this situation, it is likely that in the future there will be increasing conflict between resource users; greater litigation between parties (including the involvement of government); delayed decision-making with possible consequences of loss in recreational fishing quality; unduly high exploitation rates on fish stocks; and greater likelihood of stock failure. So often this has been the experience elsewhere in the world.

Therefore the committee has decided that a licence buyback scheme is a strategy towards changing resource usage in some fisheries and ensuring good quality fishing in the future. A proper assessment of the benefits and costs of any adjustment method introduced to significantly alter the resource share towards recreational fishers is seen as an overall requirement before implementation.

The committee also endorses the continuation of other approaches such as limiting licence transfers for commercial fishing in estuarine and beach fisheries as a long-term method of reducing commercial fishing pressure. However, it recognises that these moves are generally likely to be too slow to meet future pressures.

☐ **Recommendation 1 - Compensation for changes in resource share**

Any imposed change in resource share between commercial and recreational fishers should not occur before a full evaluation involving consultation between the two user groups.

Where an adjustment of commercial fishing effort is necessary and appropriate, the preferred option for changing the resource share is the buyback of commercial fishing licences as a means of compensation.

☐ **Recommendation 2 - Priorities for buyback**

As a priority, the salmon, herring and southern estuarine fisheries should be fully evaluated to determine whether there should be a shift in the resource share in favour of recreational fishing.

Creation of Recreational Fishing Areas

While there was considerable public support for the committee's suggested strategy of creating priority recreational fishing areas, a number of difficulties were identified in the public submissions.

The most important of these focussed on determining the surplus yield available to the commercial fishing sector, how it would be measured, the cost of doing so and the value of the final outcome where fish populations were mobile. There was also the added difficulty of defining appropriate areas, costs of enforcement and research and the implications of counter claims from the fishing industry for specific areas to be set aside for exclusive commercial use.

On balance, the committee decided that the creation of priority recreational fishing areas was unlikely to achieve the outcomes first perceived, and that the costs of management were likely to far exceed the benefits realised.

The committee also recognised that the objectives of marine park management, though laudable, are not being realised. This is because neither the funding nor resources necessary for the specific requirements of marine park management are so far being adequately met. Moreover, the current economic conditions are not assisting this situation.

The committee believes that gear controls will be the most efficient and cost-effective management tool in key recreational and conservation areas.

That is, it considers that the most acceptable and effective controls will be achieved by excluding specific gear rather than by creating priority recreational fishing areas.

This would require encouraging and monitoring community discussion on the merits of excluding certain types of fishing techniques in particular marine embayments or estuaries. Such an approach should add to the diversity of recreational fishing without necessarily detracting from the rights of commercial fishers. In the final analysis, each case for specific gear controls would need to be judged and assessed with input from affected community groups.

The following recommendation takes into account areas set aside for marine parks and others highlighted in public submissions. It also promotes a strategy of allowing for a geographical spread of different fishing opportunities.

For example, a ban on spearfishing and recreational netting in Marmion Marine Park allows more scope for recreational line fishing.

However, in some inshore waters it may be appropriate to provide for a diversity of fishing experiences by giving net fishers the opportunity to take mullet.

This proposal will supplement the more specific gear controls outlined later in this report.

□ **Recommendation 3 - Gear exclusions for key areas**

Gear exclusions should be used as a strategy to manage fishing, and provide fishing diversity in the following defined key recreational fishing areas:

Rowley Shoals	Shoalwater Bay Islands Marine
Roebuck Bay	Park
Dampier Archipelago	Peel-Harvey Estuary
Ningaloo Marine Park	Leschenault Estuary
Shark Bay	Geographe Bay
Abrolhos Islands	Hardy Inlet - Flinders Bay
Champion Bay	(Augusta)
Jurien Bay	Hamelin Bay - Deepdene - Cosy
Yanchep - Two Rocks area of	Corner
Direction Bank	Walpole-Nornalup Estuary
Marmion Marine Park	Oyster Harbour
Rottne Island	Bremer Estuary
Swan-Canning Estuary	Stokes Inlet
Cockburn Sound	Esperance Bay

Effects of Trawling in Inshore Waters

The committee recognises major public concern expressed over the effects of trawling on the seabed environment and the entire bottom fauna. Many public submissions demanded immediate cessation of all trawling in key recreational fishing areas, especially Geographe Bay and Mandurah.

The value of commercial trawl fishing in the waters adjacent to Geographe Bay, Mandurah and the Perth Metropolitan area exceeds \$1 million per annum. Much of this economic benefit flows to restaurants, tourist-related businesses and the WA fish consuming public. The value of the trawl fishery in the immediate area of Comet Bay (near Mandurah) and Bunkers Bay is considered to be significantly less.

Though recognising the proprietary rights of commercial fishers in these areas, the committee recognises that there is strong public support for an immediate end to trawling in Bunkers Bay and Comet Bay. As a consequence, the government may need to make a socio-economic judgment on whether to close these areas to trawling.

However, the committee recognises the importance of a research program being undertaken by the Fisheries Department to deal with specific benthic and trawling bycatch issues. The outcome of such research holds the key to understanding the impact of trawling on fish stocks. Additionally, it is seen as strategically valuable both from a fisheries management perspective for WA and for longer-term environmental management.

The committee notes that management rules recently introduced for the South West trawl fishery in Geographe Bay are aimed at minimising the impact of trawling on sea grass beds.

In assessing the final outcome of this vital research, the committee considers that the recreational and environmental values achieved by ending trawling need to be identified and weighed against the benefits to the commercial fishing sector and the community derived by continued trawling.

If research shows that the benefits to the community from continued trawling do not exceed the disadvantages caused by habitat changes,

bycatch losses and adverse impacts on recreational fishing, trawling in the inshore waters of Geographe Bay and Comet Bay should cease.

Such an assessment would also need to include the impact of probable changes to the seabed and fish communities. There is little or no scientific information on what happens to the sea floor and its fauna in the aftermath of trawling.

There is no guarantee that the original bottom fauna will return, or that the species which repopulate trawled areas will be recreationally desirable.

Research should aim to not only assess the impact of trawling, but also predict species composition and sea bed vegetation in a post-trawling environment.

The committee understands that the Fisheries Department has existing data on trawling and bycatch in Comet Bay, and considers that this should be used for an early evaluation of the merits of continued trawling in this area.

☐ **Recommendation 4 - Trawling management in the South-West**

The committee noted that a scientific study has already begun on the effects of trawling in Geographe Bay, Comet Bay and other inshore waters.

If the social, economic and environmental benefits of closing these areas to trawling are shown to outweigh the benefits of the commercial fishery, then trawling should be excluded from these areas.

Water Catchment Fishing

A lack of native fish fauna for sport fishing and an absence of topography which supports large, permanent freshwater rivers and lakes are two unfortunate characteristics of the South-West environment which inhibit the enhancement of inland freshwater angling.

Apart from marron, the only large native fish species is a nocturnal catfish (cobbler) which, while good eating, is not considered a sport fish.

Since the early 1930s WA communities have stocked South-West rivers and dams with trout to provide worthwhile recreational fishing.

South-West rivers and streams are increasingly being dammed to meet the state's needs for potable water and irrigation. These factors greatly reduce stream flow during the summer months, and have a direct effect on community rights to water use and fishing downstream.

While there is no doubt that fresh water will be increasingly at a premium for the state's future development, at the same time the committee considers it highly likely that water storage dams will come under closer scrutiny for a variety of recreational uses.

The committee noted that submissions from freshwater angling interests point to irrigation dams where access for fishing is allowed. Their value to the marron sport fishery is acknowledged.

However, the majority of these dams are scant in vegetation and have low fish production capacity. Fish are generally smallish and relatively scarce. This results from dams being sited to provide high water quality while minimising nutrient and sediment inflows.

By their very nature, these characteristics are consistent with quality water production but not fish production. It was also drawn to the committee's attention that the multiple use of some irrigation dams, and the spread of redfin perch in some waters, have reduced their intrinsic value as "trout angling" waters.

The committee believes there would be value in identifying a body of suitable public water to be set aside exclusively for trout fishing. There is also a strong case - especially if the effects of environmental change lead to less perennial freshwater streams - for greater recreational use of water catchment bodies established for domestic water supply.

The committee considers that the opening of one or more of the domestic water supply catchment dams to artificial lure and fly fishing for trout - under strictly controlled conditions - ought to be further investigated. This could best be achieved by a trial program in appropriate water, such as Harris Dam, under the auspices of the West Australian Water Authority (WAWA), the Fisheries Department, and interested organisations.

☐ **Recommendation 5 - Water catchment fishing**

There is a strong case for opening some West Australian Water Authority (WAWA) water catchment dams to artificial lure and fly fishing for trout under strictly controlled conditions.

A trial program, under the joint auspices of the Fisheries Department and WAWA, should be initiated in one of these closed areas to look at trout fishing and water quality. Trout fishing groups and any relevant local authorities should be involved.

Specific Purpose Recreational Fishing Dams

The construction of a large, biologically productive dam dedicated to trout angling was identified as a further opportunity for enhancing fishing diversity in the South-West. Such a dam should be of a worthwhile size (minimum of 50 hectares), with a flattish valley floor and a history of fertilisation, extensive shallow margins and a central volume of deep, cool water for fish.

It could be on private property with central management, and be along the lines of a user-pays/tourist type development. So far, few freshwater dams have been designed with the main aim of maximising fish production.

The construction of such facilities may be possible under corporate sponsorship, especially if their development could be tied to fishing club involvement and the creation of on-site promotional sporting events.

☐ **Recommendation 6 - Specific purpose recreational fishing dams**

Private and corporate sponsorship should be sought for the construction of specific purpose recreational fishing dams in the South-West.

5.2 Management Rules

Trip Limits

The committee accepts that trip limits would be difficult to implement because of the impracticality of enforcement, perceived inequities, and significant public opposition.

Rather than opt for statewide trip limits, there should be defined possession-by-weight limits in areas of high conservation value where enforcement is practical (i.e. marine parks such as the Ningaloo Reef area).

Outside conservation areas tighter daily bag limits would serve the same function and be far more practical for enforcement.

Fisheries officers commented that state wide possession limits would be extremely difficult to police because of the difficulty in proving ownership or possession of fish in many situations.

For example, angling parties camping in remote areas often share a freezer, and will come and go at different times. A simple denial of ownership by an angler could make proof of possession next to impossible.

Anomalies can also occur. Possession limits might apply in people's homes and fish storage areas, but fish held there in excess of the limit may have been legitimately obtained.

The strongest public opposition to trip limits came from country fishers, who said that they would be discriminated against by unfair constraints on what they could take home from once-a-year fishing trips.

Trip limits were also seen by many members of the public to be ineffective in controlling illegal fish selling ("shamateurism") and, in fact, would unfairly penalise honest fishers.

☐ **Recommendation 7 - Trip limits**

Trip limits should not be implemented at this time because of the impracticality of enforcement, perceived inequities and significant public opposition.

There should be possession-by-weight or special bag limits in areas with a high conservation value (e.g. Ningaloo Marine Park), and their use should be further evaluated.

Bag and size limits

The committee believes that promoting proper recreational fishing ethics is the best way to manage the fishery.

Bag and size limits are seen by fisheries managers, marine scientists, and fishers themselves as an important management tool, not only to help conserve the resource, but also to serve as an educational strategy to discourage the indiscriminate plundering of fish stocks.

These two constraints are accepted worldwide as positive steps and need to take into account factors such as fish size and age of maturity, optimising

yield, curbing greed and wastage, and the thoughtless capture of undersize fish and crustaceans.

Without the introduction of state wide trip limits, it is critical that bag limits are set at a realistic level if they are to have a significant effect on controlling the exploitation of fish stocks. If they are set too high, they will have little or no effect on the long-term conservation of fish stocks. In fact, they could be counter-productive in that some fishers may consider them a target to aim at.

The committee believes that without trip limits there should be some reductions to the daily bag limits on key species proposed in its discussion paper.

Many of the submissions, especially from key recreational fishing groups, suggested that the original bag limit proposals were too generous, especially in Category 4.

There was wide public support for the system of grouping daily bag limits into four main categories. Therefore these categories should be adhered to when making further revisions.

Though there was general agreement on the need to set equitable bag limits, the committee was unable to reach a unanimous view on precise levels for Categories 1, 2 and 4. However, the bag limit of 20 for Category 3 was accepted as originally proposed.

Given the scarcity of scientific data on many species, and the fact that there was no further opportunity to canvass community opinion, the committee arrived at the view that bag limits of 4, 8, 20 and 40 should be adopted at this stage. These may need further review as scientific information becomes available.

It should be noted that in its initial proposals for Categories 1 and 2 (PRIZE FISH and REEF FISH), the committee simply observed the status quo e.g. bag limits of 5 and 10.

In the revised proposal Category 1 (PRIZE FISH) comes down to a bag limit of four per species per day, and Category 2 to a mixed bag of eight fish per day.

Additionally, a mixed bag limit needs to apply to Category 1 species to put an upper limit on the take in this category. Without this mixed bag limit it would be possible for unscrupulous fishers to target only species in this peak category, and push their total catch beyond the reasonable bounds that are in keeping with the stated values of recreational fishing. Further, without a ceiling it would be anomalous, because Category 2 is based on a mixed bag limit of eight fish.

In introducing Categories 3 and 4, the committee has recognised the need to place some restrictions on catch for the smaller inshore fish species.

Previously there was no catch limit at all on this entire range of fish. Even though many of these species are still relatively prolific, the number of anglers targeting them appears to have increased dramatically over the last ten years. Consequently individual catches have decreased in heavily fished areas.

The committee recognises that these fish stocks are finite, and considers some restraint is vital to ensure equitable catch sharing and to emphasise the importance of a conservation ethic.

In Category 3 (TABLE FISH) the committee has recommended a daily bag limit of 20 per species per angler. This category includes popular smallish target species such as black and yellowfin bream, flathead and flounder, skipjack trevally, and tailor.

The committee believes that 20 is a fair bag limit for this range of fish which, in general, are caught at smallish sizes but have the capacity to grow to several kilos or more.

In Category 4 (BREAD and BUTTER FISH) the committee considers that a bag limit of 40 is reasonable, in line with public submissions which said that 50 was too generous.

Additionally, the committee has recommended that this limit be extended to apply to all fish species not separately listed in categories 1, 2 and 3, with the exception of nominated baitfish (e.g. whitebait, blue sardines, and mulies).

The committee hopes that the "40" category will help to promote a conservation ethic and curb excessive catches of a wide range of small fish at popular angling locations such as marina walls, jetties and harbours.

These species include Australian herring, garfish, and western sand and school whiting, as well as yellowtail and blue mackerel.

In Category 4 an angler could theoretically catch 40 of each of these small fish. However, in practice fishers would be more likely to focus on only one or two species, for example herring and garfish.

This bag limit of 40 follows the lead set by various angling clubs in recent years in limiting catches of small fish in competitions.

The committee considers that the bag limits it is now urging represent a fair and equitable catch for fishers. Bag limits also have a strong educational effect, and set species conservation guidelines for responsible anglers to follow.

While the committee recognises that lack of enforcement is a problem in the Pilbara and Kimberley, it sees value in immediately introducing additional bag limits on heavily targeted key northern recreational species. Such action should not be deferred until adequate enforcement is provided in this vast area.

There is an urgent need to set bag limit controls for edible sea shells such as clams, pipis, and similar species. These beach and reef species are vulnerable because they are so accessible and easily gathered.

The committee considers that a reasonable general daily bag limit would be two litres right across the range of these species, and would complement the two litre bag limit recently set for cockles. In some cases, particular slow-growing and rare species may need further protection. Further consideration also needs to be given to the take of sea urchins. In the case of mussels, the committee noted the recent reduction of bag limit from 20 litres to 9 litres.

Problems with southern stocks of shark, particularly whiskery and gummy, were also noted by the committee. These species don't breed until they reach about 5-7 years of age, when they have one or two pups per year. Fecundity peaks at around 12 years when they produce up to 30 per year.

A reduction in commercial shark fishing is already underway along the South Coast, and the committee suggests that a recreational bag limit may be necessary as part of an overall stock conservation strategy. This matter needs further research and investigation. As an interim measure, the committee considers that all sharks should be placed in Category 1, with a total daily bag limit of four.

Additionally, the committee noted widely expressed public concerns about fish wastage associated with demersal gill netting for shark, and considers that this aspect needs further research. More detail on this concern is provided under the heading "Gill netting" later in this section.

Trout are the only fish in WA for which an active stock enhancement program is running. The committee considers that there should be no change to the existing daily bag limit of 10 trout per fisher.

The committee considers that the nine litre limit per licensed fisher for prawns should remain. This allows scope for an excellent catch for all members of a prawning party, and helps spread the catch among the thousands who go prawning.

Existing crab and abalone bag limits were also considered fair and reasonable, and the committee saw no reason for change at this stage.

The recreational rock lobster and marron fisheries are reviewed by separate committees, and the RFAC did not consider issues specifically related to these fisheries.

On the issue of size limits the committee recommends that its original strategy of removing legal minimum lengths from Category 4 species be adhered to.

Some public submissions urged that legal lengths be retained in this category, but the committee believes that bag limits are the best conservation tool for these small species.

It reiterates that minimum sizes for small fish have never been taken seriously by the public or enforced, and in most cases have no scientific basis.

The committee noted that in some special cases big fish with a high conservation value, e.g. large northern cods and groper, should be given special protection. In addition to a bag limit, there is a strong case for introducing a maximum weight on big cods of the genera *Epinephelus*, and the committee believes that 50 kg could be a benchmark. All fish larger than this should be returned alive to the water.

There are compelling reasons to protect these big fish: they are at the peak of the food chain; they are the breeding stock; and they are mostly rare due to their exceptional size. Additionally, most are relatively easy to capture and are sometimes targeted by thoughtless fishers who simply want to boast of catching something huge, and on occasions waste the fish.

Large species in this category could include potato cod, slimy cod, Queensland groper and maori wrasse.

Size limits should be changed for the following species:

Flounder: Increase to 25cm from 23cm. Public submissions urged this change because it was felt that 23cm was too small for such a fine quality eating fish.

Red emperor: Increase to 41cm from 28cm in line with pink snapper, to enable fish to breed before capture.

Mulloway: Introduce a split bag limit of four fish per day, with three between 45cm and 70cm, and one only over 70cm to protect highly fecund large females. Mulloway previously had a legal minimum length of 33cm.

Pink snapper: Introduce a universal size of 41cm, eliminating a 28cm separate size for the South Coast.

Cods (*Epinephelus spp*): A maximum weight of 50kg be introduced for all cods of this genera. Any cod over 50kg should be returned alive to the water.

In the case of barramundi, the committee decided not to adopt suggestions for a minimum size limit. It considers that the minimum of 50cm proposed in some public submissions would be of little use in conserving barramundi breeding stock because the species changes sex from male to female at around 90cm.

Moreover, if further stock conservation measures become necessary in the future, the committee considers that a maximum size, to protect large fecund females, would be the best strategy.

Meanwhile, the committee believes that the recommended Category 1 daily bag limit of four fish is the best stock conservation measure.

The size limit for prawns was originally introduced as a method to ensure that commercial fishers targeted prawns after they had reached a reasonable market size. However, from a recreational point of view it is far better to use closed seasons to allow prawns to reach a good eating size. It is also totally impractical to expect recreational prawners to measure every prawn in their catch. The committee considers that size limits for prawns should be removed.

☐ **Recommendation 8 - Daily bag limits**

There was wide public support for the system of grouping daily bag limits into four main categories. Therefore these categories should be adhered to when making further revisions.

In cases where a species needs special protection it may be placed in a special conservation category. Stocked fish also come under a separate category.

The committee recommends that:

CATEGORY 1 - "PRIZE FISH"

Bag limit be reduced to four fish of each species per fisher per day, instead of five as proposed. Additionally a mixed bag limit of eight fish per fisher per day should apply in this category.

In the case of mulloway, the committee recommends a two-tiered bag limit consisting of three fish between 45cm and 70cm, and one only breeding fish of over 70cm.

CATEGORY 2 - "REEF FISH"

Bag limit be reduced to a mixed bag of eight fish per fisher per day, instead of 10.

CATEGORY 3 - "TABLE FISH"

Bag limit of 20 of each species per fisher per day be introduced.

CATEGORY 4 - "BREAD AND BUTTER FISH"

Category extended to cover all small fish, except nominated baitfish. Daily bag limit of 40 of each species per fisher.

☐ **Recommendation 9 - Size limits**

The committee's original strategy of removing legal minimum lengths from Category 4 species should be adhered to.

Size limits should also be increased for flounder (to 25cm from 23cm); red emperor (to 41cm from 28cm); and mulloway (to 45cm from 33cm, and for trophy fish to 70cm); pink snapper (a universal size of 41cm, eliminating a 28cm separate size for the South Coast). All cod of the genera *Epinephelus* (e.g. potato cod and Queensland groper) should have a maximum legal size of 50kg. Cod larger than this should be returned alive to the water.

The committee also considers that prawn fishing is best managed through closed seasons, and size limits on prawns should be removed.

RECOMMENDED BAG LIMITS

Category 1 - "PRIZE FISH"

Four fish of each species per fisher per day, mixed bag limit of 8 fish. Legal minimum sizes apply.

Barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*)
 Cobia (*Rachycentron canadus*)
 Cods (Serranidae family). (*Epinephelus* spp, max. weight 50 kg to apply)
 Coral trout (*Plectropomus* spp)
 Dolphinfin (mahi mahi) (*Coryphaena hippurus*)
 Jewfish, Westralian (*Glaucosoma hebraicum*)
 Mackerels (*Scomberomorus* spp, *Acanthocybium solandri*, *Grammatorcynus bicarinatus*)
 Mulloway (*Argyrosomus hololepidotus*) and black jewfish (northern mulloway - *Protonibea diacanthus*)
 Queenfish (*Scomberoides commersonianus*)
 Salmon, Australian (*Arripus truttaceus*)
 Samson fish (*Seriola hippos*)
 Sharks (all spp)
 Tuna, Southern bluefin (*Thunnus maccoyii*)
 Yellowtail kingfish (*Seriola lalandi*)

Category 2 - "REEF FISH"

A mixed bag limit of 8 fish per fisher per day. Legal minimum sizes apply.

Emperor, red (*Lutjanus sebae*)
 Groper, baldchin (*Choerodon rubescens*)
 Snapper, pink (*Chrysophrys auratus*)
 Snapper, north-west (*Lethrinus* spp)
 Snapper, queen (blue morwong - *Nemadactylus douglasii*)
 Snapper, red (*Centroberyx gerrardi*)

Category 3 - "TABLE FISH"

20 of each species per fisher per day. Legal minimum sizes apply.

Bream, black and yellowfin (*Acanthopagrus butcheri*, *A. australis*)
 Cobbler (*Cnidogobius macrocephalus*)
 Flathead and flounder (combined) (*Platycephalus spp*, and *Pseudorhombus spp*)
 Leatherjackets (Monacanthidae family)
 Mangrove jack and fingermark bream (*Lutjanus argentimaculatus*, and *L. russelli*)
 Pike and snook (combined) (*Sphyrna novaehollandiae*, *S. obtusata*, *Dinolestes lewini*)
 Skipjack trevally (*Pseudocaranx spp*)
 Tailor (*Pomatomus saltatrix*)
 Tarwhine (*Rhabdosargus sarba*)
 Threadfin salmon and bluenose salmon (*Polydactylus spp*)
 Whiting, king george (*Sillaginodes punctata*)

Category 4 - "BREAD AND BUTTER FISH"

40 fish of each species per fisher per day. No minimum sizes in this category.

All WA fish species not covered in categories 1, 2 & 3, or under special bag limits are included in Category 4. The only exceptions are baitfish of the sardine and anchovy families, Clupeidae and Engraulidae. Popular species include:

Australian herring (*Arripis georgianus*)
 Garfish (*Hyporhamphus spp*)
 Western sand and school whiting (*Sillago spp*)
 Yellowtail (*Trachurus spp*)
 Blue mackerel (*Scomber australasicus*)
 Yelloweye mullet (*Aldrichetta forsteri*) and Sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*)

Shellfish

The daily bag limit for prawns should remain at 9 litres per licensed fisher. This bag limit should also apply to cherabin.

A two-litre daily bag limit should be introduced for all edible sea shells including cockles, pipis, clams, and similar species.

Special conservation category

Western blue groper (*Achoerodus gouldii*) - bag limit 1

Stocked fish

Trout, brown and rainbow (*Salmo trutta* and *Onchorhynchus mykiss*) - bag limit 10

Fishing Methods

The committee recommends that recreational fishers be permitted to use only gear that is in keeping with the recreational fishing ethic of catching a feed for oneself and family, and for a variety of reasons enjoying the experience along the way. Methods that allow very high or indiscriminate fish kills are not appropriate for recreational fishing.

The overwhelming majority of public submissions strongly supported an approach which encouraged the conservation of fish stocks. Therefore the committee believes it has a responsibility to define what it sees as acceptable and unacceptable fishing methods.

The committee has identified a growing problem with some anglers staking out up to 50 metres of river wall or beach front while working multiple rods.

This excludes other anglers from reasonable access, and can create angry incidents.

☐ **Recommendation 10 - Gear should be in keeping with the recreational fishing ethic**

Recreational fishers should be permitted to use only gear that is in keeping with the recreational fishing ethic of catching a feed for oneself and family, and for a variety of reasons enjoying the experience along the way.

☐ **Recommendation 11 - Angling methods**

Acceptable: *Maximum of two attended rods or handlines per angler from the shore. No more than three sets of hooks as end tackle. No restriction on rod or handline numbers per boat. Maximum of one attended setline (or drop or longline) with three sets of hooks per boat.*

Unacceptable: *Unattended lines (including drop, set and long).*

Competition Fishing

Most angling clubs have moved away from high kill, heaviest bag competitions, to species and skill oriented contests. The committee endorses this attitude, and requests that community education programs encourage the conservation ethic in fishing competitions.

The committee also urges fishing clubs to be conscious of the handling and storage of large numbers of fish caught in competitions. The aim should always be to minimise wastage.

Spearfishing

The issue of compressed-air spearfishing was widely canvassed during the public discussion period, because there is a division of opinion throughout Australia over its impact on fish stocks.

The committee has decided that there are no compelling reasons to ban the use of compressed-air spearfishing throughout the state. As was pointed out many times in the submissions (including, quite significantly, some of those from key line fishing groups) there should not be a problem so long as bag and size limits are heeded.

In addition, compressed air allows divers to fish offshore areas not accessible to free divers and many line fishers. If compressed-air spearfishing was banned, more divers are likely to fish closer to shore, and there could well be increased conflict between line fishers and divers competing for the same species.

However, in key conservation areas, or for some high-conservation value species, there may be a need for area prohibitions (i.e. gear exclusion which would prevent spearfishing).

□ **Recommendation 12 - Spearfishing**

The committee has decided that there are no compelling reasons to ban the use of compressed-air spearfishing throughout the state.

However, in key conservation areas, or for some high-conservation value species, there may be a need for area prohibitions (i.e. gear exclusion which would prevent spearfishing).

Gill Netting

The great majority of public submissions indicated that amateur gill netting, particularly the use of set nets, is regarded as unacceptable by a large percentage of the recreational fishing community. There was a strong view expressed specifically against recreational netting in estuaries and rivers.

The committee urges that all estuaries should be totally closed to amateur haul, set and gill netting within three years. At the same time it recognises that haul netting for sea mullet is a popular pastime in some inshore marine areas, and represents little or no threat to other fish stocks. Therefore the committee agrees that fishers should be allowed to target sea mullet in the ocean with 57mm (2 1/4") mesh haul nets.

Set gill nets are seen by some members of the committee as an unacceptable fishing method because they can be indiscriminate, lead to fish wastage, and pose a threat to marine mammals and other sea creatures. Gill nets can waste fish through catch drop out, lice damage, and predation of meshed fish. They also result in a take of non-target species as an unintended bycatch.

However, the committee recognises the reality that commercial set gill nets are the primary method of catching many marketable species.

The committee noted that there is very little scientific information on the level of wastage from gill nets, but believes there is a strong community perception that this fishing method is highly wasteful and destructive to recreational fish stocks. Poor fishing practices such as lack of attendance at nets, or leaving them too long in the water, contribute to much of this wastage.

While the committee recognises that commercial gill netting will continue in many areas, it urges that such netting be closely scrutinised. Further, it considers that gill netting is not an appropriate recreational fishing method, and should be phased out in all West Australian waters.

If the closure of estuaries to recreational haul netting causes a significant shift in haul netting effort to inshore marine waters, there may need to be a further review of controls.

Other Fishing Nets

The committee reiterates that the following types of nets remain acceptable for recreational fishing: crab and marron drop and scoop nets; prawn haul and dab nets; and hand-drawn throw nets for baitfish.

The existing size and mesh limits for all these nets should continue to apply. Legislation should also be introduced placing a ban on recreational fishers

using commercial netting gear such as trawls, dredges, lampara nets, tangle nets, and purse seine nets.

☐ **Recommendation 13 - Estuaries closed to netting**

All estuaries should be totally closed to amateur haul and gill netting within three years.

☐ **Recommendation 14 - Mullet netting in the ocean**

Haul netting for sea mullet is recognised as a popular pastime in some inshore marine areas, and represents little or no threat to other fish stocks. Therefore fishers should be allowed to target mullet in the ocean with 57mm (2 1/4") mesh haul nets.

☐ **Recommendation 15 - Recreational set gill nets unacceptable**

Recreational set gill nets should be banned in all West Australian waters.

☐ **Recommendation 16 - No commercial gear permitted**

The use of commercial netting gear by recreational fishers should be totally banned. This includes purse-seine nets, demersal and pelagic trawls, and lampara nets.

Fish Traps, Crab Pots, and Octopus Pots

The committee considers that unattended fish traps are inappropriate as a recreational fishing method, and should be banned in all waters. Unbaited cobbler pots, set in specified areas, should be the only exception.

Crab pots are not regarded as an appropriate recreational fishing method, particularly in southern waters, due to their potential for high capture rates which may encourage shamateur activity. The committee considers that crab pots should not be used by recreational fishers in all waters south of 26°30'(Shark Bay), which is generally outside the distribution of mud crabs.

In tropical areas, where crocodiles occur, drop netting can be a highly dangerous activity. The committee considers, from a public safety point of view, that there is a strong argument for allowing the use of pots in these areas. In addition, crab pots are one of the most popular methods for taking mud crabs.

The committee saw no problem with the recreational use of unbaited octopus pots, provided fishers operated within cephalopod bag limits.

☐ **Recommendation 17 - Fish traps, dredges and crab pots**

Crab pots should be banned in all waters south of 26°30'S. Fish traps and dredges should be banned in all WA waters. Unbaited octopus and cobbler pots should remain legal in prescribed waters.

Closed Waters and Closed Seasons

The use of closed waters and closed seasons is a proven management strategy for preventing the over-exploitation of fish and shellfish stocks. In recent years both these methods have demonstrated their effectiveness in controlling recreational fishing pressure and in helping stocks to regenerate. The abalone and marron fisheries are prime examples of their benefit.

In addition, when bag limits and other controls are no longer sufficient to ensure sustainable fishing, closed waters and closed seasons are the front-line strategies for allowing fish stocks to recover rapidly by totally removing fishing pressure.

☐ **Recommendation 18 - Closed waters and seasons**

Closed areas and closed seasons are endorsed as management measures, and the committee urges that they be regarded as a front-line policy to prevent the over-exploitation of fisheries. The legal requirement should remain that all notices regarding closures be published in the Government Gazette. Additionally, they should be widely promoted through the media, and sign posted where practical.

Charter Fishing

The committee looked at the rapid growth and popularity of charter fishing operations up and down the WA coast. It noted that some charter operators sell fish caught by their recreational clients, and observed that licensed commercial fishing boats operating on recreational charter may be able to circumvent normal recreational fishing rules.

When on charter these boats can sell their catch under the guise of "commercial" fishing, and at the same time are exploiting their fare-paying passengers by using them as free labour in what is essentially a commercial fishing operation.

The committee considered that all boats operating for recreational charter should be equally bound by recreational fishing rules.

This requirement will become more imperative in the future because it is certain that recreational charters will continue to operate from established holiday and tourist centres.

Additionally, charter fishing boats have the capacity to have a significant effect on fish stocks, particularly in North-West waters.

The committee considers that professional charter operators are generally conservation-minded in their outlook, but believes that it is important to clearly define their responsibilities when fishing recreationally.

☐ **Recommendation 19 - Recreational rules to apply to charter boats**

The same recreational fishing rules should apply to charter boats as apply to the rest of the population.

All boats on charter should be subject to all recreational fishing rules, especially those defining bag limits and forbidding the sale of recreationally caught fish.

☐ **Recommendation 20 - Charter licences to be introduced**

All charter boats should be specifically licensed for the sole purpose of fishing for charter.

☐ **Recommendation 21 - Charter catches to be monitored**

A catch monitoring system should be introduced on all recreational fishing charter boats.

Aboriginal Fishing

The committee considers that there should be a clear distinction between recreational fishing and subsistence fishing. Under the Fisheries Act (1905) Aborigines are exempt from bag limits and gear restrictions. The committee believes that exemptions should only be allowed in situations where Aboriginal communities carry out subsistence fishing, using traditional methods to catch fish as a major part of their food supply.

The committee believes that traditional tribal communities north of the 26th Parallel are the only groups who should be considered for exemption. The subsistence fishing rights of Aboriginal groups should be defined in full consultation with Aboriginal representatives.

☐ **Recommendation 22 - Aboriginal subsistence fishing**

All members of the community should be subject to the same recreational fishing rules, and the Fisheries Act should be amended to stipulate this.

Traditional tribal communities north of the 26th Parallel are the only groups who should be considered for exemption. The subsistence fishing rights of Aboriginal groups should be defined in full consultation with Aboriginal representatives.

Professional Fishing Licence Holders

The committee believes that commercial fishers should be permitted to fish recreationally, provided they are bound by normal recreational fishing rules. These rules should include a prohibition on the sale of recreational catches. The Fisheries Act (1905) should be amended to clarify the recreational entitlement of licensed commercial fishers.

☐ **Recommendation 23 - Professional fishing licence holders**

The Fisheries Act (1905) should be amended to clarify the recreational entitlement of licensed commercial fishers.

5.3 Access

The committee believes that there should be a universally accepted "Code of Practice" governing access to fishing areas. This should form the basis for improving relations between fishers and landholders, both private and government. Such a code should promote a clear understanding of each group's requirement that will increase the likelihood of future access for recreational fishing being planned and provided for.

The committee noted concern in some public submissions about what they see as a gradual erosion of their access rights. Some experienced club anglers cited track closure and restriction on access to beaches and foreshore as problems in some areas.

The committee opposes what some people aptly call "barbed wire" mentality. That is, sudden closure and access constraints applied by shires and other land management authorities without good reason.

Controlling agencies or owners should keep the community informed of any changes to access. Anglers and other members of the community should not normally be confronted with closed roads without warning.

The committee urges all recreational fishers to protect their access by taking account of the fragility of coastal dune systems and the foreshore environment generally, particularly in relation to the issue of four-wheel-drive vehicles keeping to defined tracks.

Pollution, litter and vandalism are also key environmental and access problems and the committee stresses the importance of education campaigns directed at recreational fishers and campers who leave prime coastal, river or estuarine areas in a poor state.

The committee considers that access for recreational fishers should be a prime consideration when government and semi-government authorities, or private enterprise companies, build major river, ocean or harbour structures such as marinas, jetties, bridges and sea walls. These authorities should consult with recreational fishing representatives to determine fishing access needs.

Priority should also be given to maintaining and preserving existing popular fishing platforms, rather than demolishing them or letting them decline into a state of disrepair through neglect or lack of maintenance.

Prime examples are the old Busselton jetty and the long Carnarvon jetty, both of which are the hub of recreational angling for large numbers of fishers in these key areas. Every effort should be made to maintain and enhance such platforms. The committee recognises that private sponsorship could be an important source of funding for the upkeep of these community facilities.

The committee also strongly urges all marine building authorities to pay heed to the needs of the disabled at existing and future recreational fishing sites. Easily accessible, railed platforms stretching well out from rock walls to cater for wheelchair fishers are what is needed. The platform for the disabled at Mindarie Keys is an excellent example of the right approach.

☐ **Recommendation 24 - Code of practice for access**

A universal "code of practice" should be adopted to govern access to recreational fishing areas. The code should be based on common sense and courtesy and encompass the following points:

- *Access through private property shall only be after obtaining permission from the landowner.*
- *Vehicular traffic must not deviate from defined roads, tracks etc. (ie. no "bush bashing").*
- *All rubbish to be either removed or deposited in facilities provided for that purpose.*
- *Gates to be left in the state found.*
- *No unauthorised camping at wells or stock watering facilities.*
- *All fire restrictions to be observed.*
- *No unauthorised discharging of firearms.*
- *No trees to be felled or vegetation cleared without permission.*
- *Access controls imposed by landholders shall be respected.*
- *Courtesy shall be extended to all other access users.*

☐ **Recommendation 25 - Planning fishing access at new facilities**

All planning and construction organisations should formally consult with recreational fishing representatives to determine fishing access needs when planning marinas, harbours, bridges, and similar facilities. These should also take into account the needs of disabled fishers.

5.4 Community Consultation

The committee considers that the management of recreational fishing must be developed and co-ordinated in close consultation with the recreational fishing community.

The proposal put forward in the discussion paper of a central advisory committee, supported by regional liaison committees, was widely supported in public submissions.

Broad representation from recreational fishing groups, country regions, the recreational fishing retail industry, and from opinion leaders within the recreational fishing community was considered an important component.

The new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee should have several key functions. These include:

- responsibility for administering the proposed trust fund.

- advising the Minister for Fisheries on recreational fishing funding priorities.
- establishing and co-ordinating the activities of regional advisory committees in fishing centres throughout the state.
- monitoring fishing activity and identifying issues that affect recreational fishing throughout the state.
- providing advice to the Minister for Fisheries and the Fisheries Department on recreational fishing management issues.
- planning for the continuing well-being and management of recreational fishing in areas such as improving access, community education, and fish stock conservation.

In order to have some control over the expenditure of monies raised from licence fees the committee believes there is a requirement for a clear identification of costs so that total management of recreational fishing can be identified by the government and public alike.

Members of the new recreational fishing advisory committee should have a three-year rotating tenure to ensure continuity and a range of representation.

The committee also considers it crucial that the Chief Executive Officer of the Fisheries Department, or his nominee, chair the new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee. This arrangement would ensure close contact between the new RFAC and the fisheries management authority, and facilitate rapid policy and operational responses to recreational fishing issues identified by the new committee.

Nominees from the WA Recreational and Sportfishing Council would represent WA's 10,000 fishing and diving club members, and representatives from regional liaison committees would ensure a direct interface for the resolution of regional fishing issues.

In addition, the committee noted that the recreational fishing community is highly fragmented, and consists of many localised, and often issues-based, interest groups. These segments of the community are, in practice, difficult to identify and communicate with on a regular basis.

However, West Australian fishing writers and magazine editors, and other prominent fishing personalities, are all regularly involved in the key issues that affect recreational fishing, and have a great deal of contact with many of these interest groups.

These opinion leaders also represent a pool of expertise and experience which could prove invaluable in the provision of advice to the Minister and the Fisheries Department, and in planning for the continued well-being of recreational fishing.

Consequently, the committee considers that the Minister for Fisheries should appoint at least four people "with expertise in the recreational fishing area" to the new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee. These appointments should provide scope for a broad representation of community interests.

Regional liaison committees should be primarily responsible for dealing with recreational fishing issues at local level, providing advice to the central

committee, and assisting the Fisheries Department with community education programs.

☐ **Recommendation 26 - Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee**

A new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee should be established to co-ordinate the management of recreational fishing throughout the state, and provide advice on recreational fishing issues to the Minister for Fisheries.

This committee should have three-year appointments and a rotating membership. Travel and administration costs should be met from recreational fishing management funds.

The committee should consist of:

- 1 chairperson (chief executive officer of the Fisheries Department or nominee)*
- 3 regional representatives*
- 4 ministerial appointments of people with expertise in the recreational fishing area.*
- 2 WA Recreational and Sportfishing Council representatives*
- 1 WA Fishing Industry Council representative.*

☐ **Recommendation 27 - Regional liaison committees**

Regional liaison committees should be established in recreational fishing centres throughout the state to provide advice to the central committee and the Fisheries Department on local recreational fishing issues, and assist with fisheries community education programs.

The regional committees should comprise:

- 1 chairperson (regional co-ordinator - State Development)*
- 1 commercial fishing industry representative.*
- 2 WA Recreational and Sportfishing Council representatives.*
- 6-10 community representatives.*

5.5 Research

The committee considers that solid scientific research is vital as a foundation for good fisheries management decisions.

Without it, conservation strategies developed for recreational fish stocks can only be based on subjective judgments about catch and stock levels and fishing pressures.

A great deal of past research has been directed at the major recreational fisheries for rock lobster, marron, and abalone, but there has been far less into key recreational finfish species.

The committee recognises that the Fisheries Research Division already has much information on the biology of fish species with both commercial and recreational significance such as rock lobster, Australian salmon, herring, whiting, blue manna crabs, prawns, abalone, pink snapper and barramundi.

However, not as much appears to be known about important angling species with less commercial significance such as mullet, tailor, Westralian jewfish, spanish mackerel, cobia, mahi mahi etc.

Perhaps even more importantly, there is very little up-to-date research information available on recreational fishing activity and catch levels, except in the marron and rock lobster fisheries.

This information is of prime importance for the development of management strategies, and will be crucial for such high-use areas as Exmouth, Shark Bay and Geographe Bay, or for heavily exploited species such as tailor.

The committee considers that research into recreational fishing needs to be wide-ranging, and must cover not only fish biology, but also demographic, sociological and other factors.

The fundamental questions of who, how, when, why, where, and how many people go fishing are just as important for proper long-term management as questions of catch and abundance.

In addition, economic research is an important source of information, particularly when catch sharing arrangements may need to be altered.

Research into factors such as the Leeuwin Current, which affect fish habitats, recruitment and nursery areas is also becoming a priority.

A great majority of the public submissions indicated strong support for the establishment of a research program within the Fisheries Research Division dedicated exclusively to recreational fisheries. The submissions generally endorsed the research strategies proposed in the discussion paper.

In addition, many public submissions, especially those from fishing clubs, indicated enthusiasm for the idea of participating as volunteers in research programs.

Clubs were also particularly keen to help supplement research information by allowing access to historical club records.

Recreational Research Program

The committee considers that the establishment of a proper scientific research program, within the Fisheries Research Division, dedicated exclusively to the needs of recreational fishing is the top priority.

The objectives of such a program should include the provision of sound biological information on recreationally important fish stocks and the provision of sound scientific information relevant to the conservation of fish stocks and habitat.

Strategies should include:

- the collation of all available past research information on recreationally important species.
- the development of an information base and catch monitoring system on important recreational fish stocks.
- development of population modelling techniques for recreational fish.

- monitoring of overall and locally specific fishing activity and pressure.
- investigation into the biology and migration patterns of key recreational species.
- dissemination of research results to provide feedback to recreational advisory committees and other user groups.

To further develop and implement these strategies in the short term it is proposed that a scientific research officer and two technical officers be appointed within the Research Division of the Fisheries Department to work full-time on recreational fishing.

The committee has identified the following key recreational species as the first priorities for any recreational research program:

Salmon
Herring
Tailor
Mulloway
Westralian jewfish
Spanish mackerel
Billfish
Barramundi
Tunas
Snappers

☐ **Recommendation 28 - Recreational fishing research program**

A scientific research program should be established within the Fisheries Research Division, exclusively for the management needs of recreational fishing.

Initially a research scientist and two technical officers should be appointed to work full-time in the program.

☐ **Recommendation 29 - Collation of past research information**

All available past research information on recreationally important species and fishing activity in WA should be collated, and published to serve as a basis for further studies.

☐ **Recommendation 30 - Information base and catch monitoring**

A recreational fishing information base and continuing system of data collection should be established. Recreational fishing clubs should be canvassed for assistance in this project.

☐ **Recommendation 31 - Fish population modelling**

Fish population modelling for key recreational species needs to be developed and resourced to assess the impact of fishing pressures on these stocks.

Aquaculture, FADs, stock enhancement

The committee acknowledges the value of long-term strategic research into stock enhancement strategies such as aquaculture, artificial reefs, and fish

aggregating devices. However, except in some very specific instances, these strategies are considered to be a lower priority than education and research.

The committee considers that, except in the case of barramundi and trout, stock enhancement strategies have limited application for wild fish stocks at this stage.

The value of artificial reefs and FADs for actually enhancing fish stocks is also widely disputed, and factors such as PCB's and PVC leaching in artificial reefs constructed of motor vehicle tyres need further investigation.

In addition, the committee considers that it would be unwise to encourage the widespread establishment of small artificial reefs without definitive research into their effect.

These structures act as an aggregating device for both fish and fishers, and may well increase fishing pressure without increasing the available fish stocks. Although there is an initial short-lived increase in fishing success due to aggregation around these small artificial reefs, in the long-term they may simply help to depopulate surrounding areas and focus fishing pressure.

In the case of barramundi, the committee considers there is a strong case for examining the use of a fish hatchery and stocking program for Kimberley waters.

Environmental degradation and the damming of river systems have both had a major impact on barramundi habitat and range in WA. Perhaps most significantly, the construction of dams has blocked some of the major rivers, such as the Ord, to barramundi migrating upstream.

Stocking programs, using cost-effective farming techniques developed in Queensland and the Northern Territory, could significantly enhance barramundi fishing, especially in waters such as Lake Argyle where there is no natural barramundi recruitment.

☐ **Recommendation 32 - Barramundi stock enhancement**

As a priority, aquaculture should be fully investigated as a method for enhancing wild barramundi stocks in the Kimberleys, particularly in Lakes Kununurra and Argyle.

☐ **Recommendation 33 - FADs, artificial reefs, stock enhancement**

Much more needs to be known about all these stock enhancement strategies before any scientific judgment can be made about their capacity to increase stocks of various recreational species.

While the committee endorses the concept of artificial reefs, it notes concerns that tyre constructions are known to leak toxic chemicals into the ocean such as poly-vinyl chlorides and PCB's. These effects should be fully investigated before more tyre constructions are approved.

Fish tagging

The committee considers that fish tagging is best carried out as part of a properly managed research program.

It recognises that tag and release tournaments are held world-wide, and that sport and game fishing clubs have tag and release programs. But, it is not in favour of "random tagging", especially for small and medium sized fish such as tailor, trevally and small tuna.

"Random tagging" is a waste of money and unnecessary when the fish can just as easily be released untagged. In many fishing competitions the insertion of a tag identifies successful capture, and in the hands of experienced fishers can have some conservation value.

However, the committee also recognises that recreational fishers are keen to participate in research tagging programs, and should be encouraged to do so.

Any recreational research tagging program should involve fishers in both the tagging and retrieval components of the program.

In the case of large, robust species such as billfish, the committee recognises the educational and conservation values of tag and release activities. Due to their size these big fish are easier to tag, and if handled carefully are less prone to mortality from tagging than smaller species.

In addition gamefishing clubs are usually better organised, and keep more useful records of tagging activities than individual anglers. In many cases the only information available on the migration of large gamefish comes from club and association initiated tagging.

☐ **Recommendation 34 - Fish tagging**

The committee recognises the educational and conservation value of tag and release activities for the large, robust species such as billfish. However, it considers random tagging of smaller species to be wasteful and of no scientific value.

Tagging should be encouraged, but be carried out only as part of a properly managed scientific research program. Recreational fishers should be encouraged to take part in such programs.

5.6 Community Education

The committee considers that management of our recreational fish resources is largely dependent on the majority of the public abiding by fishing rules voluntarily.

The fishing community needs to be properly informed of the reasons for management decisions, and given a clear lead on the values and attitudes which will assist in sustaining fish stocks.

Education programs need to aim at developing widespread understanding of, and support for, fishing rules.

The great majority of public submissions fully supported the use of community education as the major management strategy for recreational fishing.

The committee also considers that the effective implementation of many of the recommendations in this review will depend largely on the further development and success of community education programs.

Recommendations which hinge on community education programs for their successful implementation include gear exclusion zones, water catchment fishing, bag and trip limits, size limits, fishing methods, charter boat fishing, access, licensing, community consultation, research, enforcement and the environment.

These programs must be adequately resourced and funded if they are to achieve a full measure of effectiveness.

Community education programs need to encourage ethical recreational fishing behaviour throughout the community, and should take advantage of all possible media, including print, television, radio, and signposting where appropriate.

Poster campaigns through tackle retail outlets, the wide availability of printed information on recreational fishing, and face-to-face contact with fishers have already proved their worth in the marron, rock lobster, and abalone fisheries. These tactics should remain a feature of further community education campaigns. Issuing information with fishing licences is also an excellent educational approach.

There is also a specific need for campaigns directed at ethnic groups to promote and encourage appropriate recreational fishing behaviour, particularly with reference to shellfish gathering and crabbing.

Key conservation areas such as Ningaloo Marine Park, and major recreational fisheries such as the tailor and crab fisheries also require specific community education programs if fishing rules are to be effective.

Fishing clinics for both school children and adults are seen as an important strategy for involving local community groups in fishing issues and encouraging the right values and attitudes to the use of fish resources.

The committee considers that these community education strategies should be further developed in conjunction with the new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee, and regional liaison committees.

Initially, two full-time specialist community education officers should be appointed to the Fisheries Department's Community Awareness Branch to further develop and implement community education programs on key recreational fishing issues.

It is envisaged that the first community education officer should be responsible for the establishment, co-ordination, training and resourcing of volunteer groups, and the development of educational resource materials. He or she should work closely with the Fisheries Department's Operations Division and Community Awareness Branch.

The second community education officer should be responsible for in-service training of Fisheries Officers in education techniques, the development of education resource materials, and other promotional activities.

Funding for the production of printed information and signage, the development of both regional and statewide media campaigns, and the further development of educational material is a top priority.

With a target audience of over 300,000, it is crucial that print runs on brochures are adequate, and maximum use is made of wide circulation media.

Volunteer Community Liaison Networks be Established

The committee considers that network of volunteer Fisheries Community Liaison Officers should be established.

The use of properly co-ordinated and trained volunteers represents a massive, and highly cost-effective opportunity for increasing fisheries management profile at the beach front, and providing direct access to the recreational fishing community, and to specific ethnic and user groups within that community.

Many angling clubs and several ethnic groups have already indicated their willingness to support and participate in such a scheme, and can recommend people to play such a role.

It is critically important that the community education officer responsible for co-ordinating volunteer groups should be appointed before any moves to establish such a scheme are made. Community credibility and the long-term success of such a program is dependent on adequate resourcing.

☐ **Recommendation 35 - Community education officers**

Initially two full-time community education officers should be appointed to the Fisheries Department to further develop, implement and support community education programs.

☐ **Recommendation 36 - Community liaison officers**

A network of volunteer community liaison officers should be established to assist in community education programs, and recreational fisheries management.

☐ **Recommendation 37 - Community involvement in programs**

Fishing clubs and regional liaison committees should have a key role in community education programs.

☐ **Recommendation 38 - Fishing clinics**

Fishing clinics for anglers and divers, and as school activities, should be developed as a regular feature of community education programs throughout the state.

☐ **Recommendation 39 - Charter boat operators**

Charter boat operators and their clients need to be specifically targeted as part of any community education program.

☐ **Recommendation 40 - Education programs**

Specific education programs should be directed at identified target groups, or in specific fisheries or areas, to inform the community of

fishing conservation rules and promote and encourage appropriate recreational fishing behaviour.

Priorities are: programs aimed at ethnic groups, particularly with reference to shellfish gathering and crabbing; programs for key conservation areas such as Ningaloo Marine Park; programs for the crab, tailor and abalone fisheries; and a general program to promote recreational fishing ethics and the new fishing rules introduced as a result of this report.

5.7 Enforcement

The committee has reached the conclusion that effective policing is not just about increasing fines and imposing further restrictions. It is about providing a visible presence which makes the would be errant fisher think twice about the chances of escaping detection.

Community education programs are also a key field management strategy which dovetails with the enforcement role of fisheries officers. These programs are capable of greatly extending community awareness and consequently the effectiveness of enforcement activities (see 5.6 - community education).

Pilbara and Kimberley enforcement

The committee recognised that the recreational and commercial fishery north of the 26th Parallel is largely unsupervised. The recreational fishery is exploited in the manner of frontier fishery. Therefore it endorses a strategy of employing fisheries officers to cover Karratha, Port Hedland, Broome and Kununurra.

Their employment would also assist in meeting enforcement requirements for commercial fisheries as part of an integrated fisheries management strategy.

☐ **Recommendation 41 - Appointment of North-West fisheries officers**

More fisheries officers should be appointed to supervise the unmanaged recreational fishery north of 26°S.

Volunteer community liaison officers

The committee considers that the use of voluntary community liaison officers should be a major part of any recreational fisheries management program.

The committee emphasises that volunteers should not be seen as "Honorary Fisheries Wardens". Rather, they should play a crucial community education role, and assist local fisheries officers by providing information and advice to fellow fishers on the beach front, accompanying patrols, giving talks to local angling clubs, school groups and other community groups, and organising or participating in local events such as fishing competitions, clinics and displays to raise community awareness of recreational fishing issues.

These volunteer liaison officers would actively engage in helping to educate the public about fishing rules (bag and size limits). A number of submissions received from key angling clubs supported such an approach and offered to supply the right people to fulfil such a role.

Legal powers of arrest and prosecution for breaches of fisheries rules should remain solely in the hands of professional fisheries officers, appointed under the Fisheries Act. Law enforcement demands high degree of training and experience, and it would be impractical and unreasonable to expect volunteers to fulfil this role.

Volunteers should work in close contact with regional recreational fishing liaison committees, the Fisheries Department's Community Awareness Branch, Fisheries Operations regional managers, and district offices. The proper co-ordination of a volunteer program is integral to its success and community credibility.

☐ **Recommendation 42 - Volunteer community liaison officers**

The network of voluntary community liaison officers mentioned in Recommendation 36 should also be used to increase management profile on the beach front.

The committee emphasises that volunteers should not be seen as "Honorary Fisheries Wardens". Rather, they should play a crucial community education role, and assist local fisheries officers by providing information and advice to fellow fishers on the beach front, accompanying patrols, giving talks to local angling clubs, school groups and other community groups, and organising or participating in local events such as fishing competitions, clinics and displays to raise community awareness of recreational fishing issues.

Penalties

The committee considers that, as a guiding principle, penalties for fishing offences should be set to reflect the severity of the offence. However, it is important that fines for minor offences not be set so high that they cause strong resentment and provide a motivation for abuse, and even assault, of fisheries enforcement officers.

In the case of illegal recreational fish selling (shamateurism), the fines should be both a realistic deterrent, and also reflect the potential illicit gain.

Where bag and size limits are contravened through either greed or ignorance, but where selling is not an issue, the committee considers that a graduated system of fines would be the most effective deterrent. It also is likely that the public would accept this as the most equitable approach.

For example, in addition to the standard fine for contravening bag or size limits, there should be an additional penalty of say, \$10.00, for every fish taken illegally.

☐ **Recommendation 43 - Bag limit fines according to offence**

Fines for catches over the daily bag limit should be graduated according to the severity of the offence, i.e. a base fine, plus a penalty for every fish over the bag limit.

On-the-spot-fines

The committee noted that there was support for the concept of on-the-spot fines and a unit value penalty system. A unit value penalty approach would directly link fine amounts with annual inflation rates, thus keeping fines in step with the cost of living. It would also remove the need to seek Parliamentary approval every time a fine needed adjustment.

The power to legalise on-the-spot fines should be included in the Fisheries Act, and the committee recommends that these methods be investigated, and proceeded with if found worthwhile.

☐ **Recommendation 44 - Fines linked to inflation**

Fines for fisheries offences should be linked to the Consumer Price Index through a unit value penalty system.

☐ **Recommendation 45 - On-the-spot fines**

The power to impose on-the-spot-fines should be included in the Fisheries Act and the value of an on-the-spot fine system needs to be investigated, and implemented if found worthwhile.

"Shamateur" sales

The committee found overwhelming support throughout the public submissions for its moves to stamp out illegal fish selling ("shamateur" sales) by recreational fishers.

Section 32 of the Fisheries Act sets penalties for illegal fish sales which range up to \$15,000, plus 10 times the wholesale value of the catch. However, this only applies in cases where the fish species involved are managed under a Limited Entry Fishery program, such as rock lobster.

This high level of penalties should apply to all fish selling offences for all species. Penalties should also include provision for confiscation of catches, boats, car, freezers and fishing gear used by the shamateur. Further, the committee urges that buyers of illegally sold fish should incur similar penalties.

☐ **Recommendation 46 - Increased penalties for illegal fish selling**

There should be a higher level of penalties, similar to those applicable in commercial limited entry fisheries, for the sellers and buyers of all illegally sold fish.

"Fish Watch"

The committee supports the establishment of a community-based "Fish Watch" system, through which people can immediately report fisheries offences or other impacts on the marine environment to the Fisheries Department. This would be similar to the "Fish Watch" system introduced in New South Wales. A toll-free phone number which can be called from anywhere in the state is an important element.

For such a system to succeed, the community also needs to be kept informed of any results. It would be useful if a log of such reports was kept and made available to the new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee.

☐ **Recommendation 47 - Fish Watch**

There should be a "Fish Watch" system established to enable the community to report fishing and selling offences and other acts affecting the aquatic environment. All reports should be logged and made available to the new Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee.

5.8 The Environment

Estuaries and marine embayments play a critical role in the life cycle of most important recreational fishing species. These areas not only provide the main breeding and nursery grounds for many species, they are also prime fishing areas.

Such important angling fish as black bream, cobbler, flathead, king george whiting, tailor, mullet, whitebait, yellowtail scad, and flounder, as well as prawns and crabs, all depend on or make use of estuaries.

The juveniles of many species use the protected waters of estuaries as nursery areas to feed and grow over the summer months, migrating to the ocean or estuary mouths with the onset of winter rains.

In addition, the Swan-Canning, Peel-Harvey and Leschenault estuaries provide around 70 per cent of the recreational fishery for blue marlin crabs, river prawns, and king prawns.

The committee believes that estuarine fish nursery areas and inshore sea grass beds are at major risk from agricultural, industrial and domestic pollution. These areas are being increasingly polluted, particularly in the South-West.

It is crucial for the future of major fisheries in Western Australia that water quality and the integrity of these ecosystems be maintained at the healthiest level and protected from further degradation due to increased salinity, erosion, eutrophication, industrial pollution, herbicides and pesticides.

Good catchment management ensures the future of the fisheries. At the same time, both recreational and commercial fishers are often the first groups to be affected by catchment and water degradation and pollution.

It is essential that the EPA and catchment management authorities formally consult with the Fisheries Department when setting environmental impact guidelines for projects that may affect fish nursery areas (i.e. placement of marinas and canal estate developments).

The committee recognises that the Office of Catchment Management has already started the process of cooperative catchment management by coordinating the activities of state government departments, and establishing community-based catchment management groups, and endorses this approach.

However, the committee notes that although land-based resource managers are well represented in this area, fisheries managers, fishing groups and other recreational water resource users are not.

The direct impact of catchment management strategies is felt first downstream. In the case of estuaries, often most strongly by the fishing community.

The failure of these strategies may well spell the decline of many key estuarine fisheries, and have a severe impact on local tourism in coastal towns which have fishing as one of their key attractions.

Catchment management strategies should be developed in consultation with fisheries managers and the fishing community.

The committee proposes that the Office of Catchment Management, or the relevant authority, seeks involvement from both the Fisheries Department and the recreational fishing community in the process of integrated catchment management.

These fishing communities can also form an essential feed-back mechanism which can assess the effectiveness of catchment management programs from a user's perspective.

A feature of the Recreational Fishing Regional Liaison Committees, proposed in Part 5.4, should be that they link into local area catchment management groups.

In addition, many important inshore habitat and nursery areas are at risk from industrial and other developments. These areas need to be clearly identified, and their integrity protected through a system of reserves under the Fisheries Act

☐ **Recommendation 48 - Environmental impact reviews in aquatic areas**

The Environmental Protection Authority and other management authorities should be formally required to consult with the Fisheries Department during the environmental impact review process.

☐ **Recommendation 49 - Protection of fish habitats and nurseries**

A system of reserves for fish habitat protection should be implemented under the Fisheries Act for key fish nursery and habitat areas.

☐ **Recommendation 50 - Aquatic pollution**

Catchment management control agencies should involve fisheries managers and recreational water users in the process of integrated catchment management.

Fisher pollution

The Committee considers that non-biodegradable plastics discarded by boat and shore fishers are a significant source of oceanic and shoreline pollution. The great majority of these plastics are used in bait packaging.

Other sources of pollution generated by the fishing community include nylon fishing line, which is a hazard for seabirds and marine animals, plastic packaging of fishing tackle, plastic bags of all sorts, and discarded bottles, tins and other refuse.

Environmental degradation such as track erosion, the spread of the dieback fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*), and the destruction of plants and ground cover caused through the careless use of off-road vehicles can also be attributed to sectors of the recreational fishing community.

The committee considers that these forms of fisher-caused pollution should be a major focus of community education programs. In addition, the access "code of practice" (see 5.3) for all fishers should assist in addressing these problems.

☐ **Recommendation 51 - Community education**

Pollution created by fishers should be a major focus of recreational fishing community education programs.

Emphasis should be on the following:

- *careless use of offroad vehicles.*
- *dumping of litter on beaches and river banks.*
- *polluting the coastline and inshore waters with discarded objects such as bottles, tins, plastic bags and nylon fishing line.*

Bait packaging

Bait used by recreational fishers is usually packaged for retail sale in non-biodegradable plastic bags.

Mulies, whitebait, prawns and other popular baits are produced and packaged locally, but large quantities are also imported from the eastern states, and sometimes overseas.

Often, but not always, imported baits are repackaged locally for retail sale.

The committee considers that a national strategy to eliminate the use of non-biodegradable bait packaging should be developed in conjunction with the federal and other state governments.

At the WA end of the market, the use of non-biodegradable plastics should be actively discouraged by the development of a state-initiated incentive or disincentive scheme.

☐ **Recommendation 52 - Bait packaging**

The government should initiate the development of a national strategy to eliminate non-biodegradable bait packaging, particularly at the repacking and retail ends of the market.

Additionally, the further use of non-biodegradable bait packaging should be actively discouraged at a state level through either an incentive or disincentive scheme.

Dumping of oil

The dumping of oil at sea by boats, and the discarding of plastic bait bands and other rubbish are also of significant concern.

The committee considers that these practices are totally unacceptable, and that positive public action should be taken to ensure all boats comply with proper environmental standards regarding rubbish and oil disposal.

☐ **Recommendation 53 - Dumping at sea**

The Fisheries Department, and other marine management authorities, should continue to play an active role in the elimination of oil and rubbish dumping at sea.

Toxic anti-fouling paints

The release of toxic tributyl tin (TBT) from anti-fouling paints can become a major health hazard for both fish and humans, particularly in the calm waters of marinas where hundreds of boats are moored.

The committee considers that the continued use of anti-fouling paints containing TBT poses an unacceptable health risk, and endorses proposals put forward by the EPA for a total ban on the use of these paints on boats less than 25m in length.

Introduced organisms

When ships discharge their ballast water into harbour waters, they also sow a range of exotic organisms including fish into the local aquatic environment. The import of dinoflagellate algae in this ballast water is a major concern.

Under the right conditions of water temperature, algae can form toxic blooms which cause fish kills and serious irritation to the skin and eyes of humans who come in contact with them.

In addition, some dinoflagellate algae produce toxins which can accumulate in shellfish and fin fish, and cause food poisoning in people, fish, pets, and other animals.

☐ **Recommendation 54 - Discharge of ballast water**

The committee recognises that the problem of introduced organisms is already under consideration federally by the Australian Fisheries Council, but urges that action be taken to ensure that ships discharge "foreign" ballast water well away from inshore areas.

5.9 Licensing and Funding

The committee considers that the single most critical issue for the future management of recreational fishing is the availability of funds for management programs.

Without adequate funding to implement the strategies outlined in this report, recreational fishing will continue to function without the necessary management for key angling species.

Many of the public submissions strongly urged the committee to resolve the issue of funding. Further, they suggested that the entire review process could turn out to be a complete waste of time if funds were not made available.

Realistically, the committee considered that there are two major approaches for funding recreational fishing management.

One approach is the specific allocation of a share from Commonwealth sales tax levy on fishing gear and associated fishing expenditure, to the states, for the management of recreational fishing. This approach can only be resolved at a Commonwealth level, but was seen by the committee as the fairest method of providing funds for the management of angling. A specific state allocation of about \$2.5 million a year would need to be sought from the Commonwealth.

The approach of a sales tax sharing arrangement should be pursued at a federal level through the Australian Fisheries Council of Fisheries Ministers, chaired by Primary Industries Minister John Kerin. Further comment on the case for such action is identified in section 5.10.

Research by the committee has identified a federal-state tax sharing arrangement in the U.S.A. which could provide a lead to the Federal Government in Australia.

In the United States, the Wallop-Breaux Fund is a national body which, by legislation, distributes monies raised by the Federal Aid in Sports Fish Restoration Act.

The principle of the original Federal Aid in Sports Fish Restoration Act was to reappropriate motor boat fuel tax revenues to the Wallop-Breaux Fund. Later amendments then included a provision that directed reallocation of these funds into two accounts - the Boating Safety Account and the Sport Fishing Restoration Account.

The latter also receives manufacturers' excise tax revenue from fishing equipment and import duties on fishing equipment and boats.

The Wallop-Breaux Fund allocates federal funds raised from fuel tax, excise tax and import duties back to the states. These funds are dedicated to the management of recreational fishing.

However, the committee recognises that the federal option is a longer-term strategy and cannot address the immediate needs of providing funds for recreational fishing management in WA. This can only be achieved by a WA-based licensing system, which has the advantage of being totally under state control.

Many of the submissions strongly supported the principle of a recreational fishing licence, provided that funds were held in a watertight trust fund exclusively for the use of recreational fisheries management.

However, there was strong opposition, particularly from the South-West, to the concept presented in the discussion paper of a general recreational fishing licence.

An all-embracing recreational fishing licence at best drew only qualified support, and at worst was strongly opposed in the majority of public submissions.

Many people were against general licensing for an array of subjective reasons including: it is un-Australian; that recreational fishing is part of our heritage and one of the few remaining freedoms; and that it would be just more government/big brother interference.

Others complained that they were already paying through sales tax on fishing tackle and licence fees for vehicles, boats, trailers, radios etc.

There was also opposition from people who thought licensing would be impractical, unenforceable, and result in funds being swallowed up by administrative costs. However, the committee identified a significant swing in favour of general licensing towards the end of the public discussion period.

On balance, the committee considers that a general licence would be inappropriate at this time, but it believes that in the long term such a measure may well become necessary.

Meanwhile, as a more immediate approach to raising funds, there is a strong case for restructuring the existing licence arrangements to include the most popular and valuable recreational species. These licences would apply to interstate and international visitors, as well as all West Australian residents.

The crab, prawn and abalone recreational fisheries demand the greatest expenditure and resources in the areas of enforcement, management and education.

In addition, freshwater fisheries such as trout and marron, and the rock lobster and netting fisheries, need intensive management and enforcement to ensure their long-term sustainability.

All these fisheries provide high value, high quality seafood for home consumption. They also offer thousands of West Australians a superb and continuing form of recreation in easily accessible populated areas.

Therefore the committee believes that it is reasonable for users of these fisheries to contribute to their long-term management, and in doing so help provide funds for the integrated management of recreational fishing throughout the state.

The committee considers that a cost effective and easily accessible licensing system which incorporates these species can provide sufficient funding for the overall management of recreational fishing.

This system should comprise six categories: the existing three categories of rock lobster, net fishing and marron, and in addition three new categories to cover South West freshwater angling (redfin perch and trout and freshwater cobbler), abalone, prawns and crabs.

The licence fee proposed for each category is as follows:

Rock lobster	\$20
Marron	\$15
Net fishing	\$15
Abalone	\$15
South West freshwater angling	\$15
Prawns and crabs	\$10

In setting these fees, the committee was aware of the considerable management already provided for these species, their high intrinsic value and level of charges in other Australian states.

For a person who undertook all of these forms of fishing, annual licensing costs would be \$90 per year. While some might consider this excessively high, such a situation is likely to be exceptional.

The committee was not persuaded to introduce a lower umbrella licence fee for all categories due to the impact on revenue.

In estimating the revenue raised from licensing, 50 per cent rebates for pensioners, seniors card holders and children were taken into account.

The committee considers it vitally important that fishing licences be easy to obtain from a maximum number of outlets near centres of fishing activity. Further, the cost of collecting licence fees should be minimised.

Australia Post offers an electronic counter service, which the committee believes can fulfil all the requirements for a cost effective licence system.

Australia Post has over 400 outlets throughout WA, all of which could issue fishing licences. Some of these are open outside normal office hours on weekends and public holidays.

This system is also capable of significantly reducing the administration costs involved in issuing licences.

All licence fees should be placed in a special trust account dedicated to the management of recreational fishing. The terms of the trust account need to allow for the use of funds for specific sponsored projects.

The committee has identified the funding of education and research as priorities. Fuller details of costs and revenue implications are identified in Section 5.10 covering the strategies outlined in this report.

The committee believes that funds for artificial reefs, FADs, fishing platforms, fishing dams and other stock enhancement programs should also be sought from the private sector in the form of sponsorship. This should be catered for in the administration of the proposed recreational fishing management trust fund.

Following are the licence fees charged in other states:

South Australia

Netting	\$17
Rock lobster	\$17
Total	\$34

Victoria

Amateur fishing licence (includes inland fishing, yabbie pots and rock lobster)	\$55
Netting	\$35
Total	\$90

Tasmania

Non-commercial diver's licence (abalone, rock lobster, scallops)	\$35
Non-commercial pot licence (rock lobster)	\$35
Inland fishing licence	\$35
Total	\$105

The Northern Territory, Queensland, and New South Wales do not have any recreational fishing licensing

☐ **Recommendation 55 - No general recreational fishing licence**

No general fishing licence should be introduced at this stage in the development of recreational fishing management.

☐ **Recommendation 56 - Extended licence categories**

The existing recreational fishing licences required for rock lobster, netting and marron should be extended as follows:

Rock lobster	\$20
Net fishing	\$15
Marron	\$15
South-West freshwater angling (trout, redfin perch, freshwater cobbler)	\$15
Abalone	\$15
Prawns and crabs	\$10

☐ **Recommendation 57 - Trust fund for fees**

All revenue collected from recreational fishing licences should be placed in a special Trust Account, dedicated to recreational fishing management in WA.

☐ **Recommendation 58 - Licence issuing**

Recreational fishing licences should be issued for a minimum cost, and through a maximum number of outlets.

The committee considers that Australia Post appears to offer the most cost effective and widespread service now available through its electronic counter service facility.

☐ **Recommendation 59 - Funding priorities**

The committee has identified that education and research should receive first priorities for funding.

☐ **Recommendation 60 - Stock enhancement sponsorship**

Corporate sponsorship should be canvassed for artificial reef construction, fishing platforms, fishing dams, and other stock enhancement programs.

☐ **Recommendation 61 - Alternative funding**

The West Australian Government should present a case through the Australian Fisheries Council for Commonwealth funding of recreational fisheries management.

5.10 Financial Analysis

The committee intends to identify sufficient funding sources to meet the future management requirements of recreational fishing.

Towards that objective, an indicative budget has been prepared which sets down funding requirements for new programs. The committee also sought from the Fisheries Department a cost appraisal of existing management programs for recreational fishing (see Table 1).

These existing programs have so far focussed on managing the marron, rock lobster, abalone, crab and estuarine net fisheries. There is also a small community awareness program detailing the requirements for managing and sustaining fish stocks. Marron research and trout stocking are an important element of recreational fish research and stock enhancement.

An analysis of the Fisheries Department expenditure in 1989/90 shows direct spending of \$0.867m on recreational fishing. This covered management, research, licensing and extension. Consolidated Revenue funding of \$0.583m has been offset by revenue of \$0.626m collected from current marron, net fishing and rock lobster recreational licensing.

Funding to meet the costs of recreational fishing administration and the two-year review process has been sourced from the Fisheries Research and Development Fund.

The cost to the Fisheries Department of recreational fisheries enforcement in 1989/90 has been estimated at \$1.69m. This expenditure was mainly associated with recreational fishing for rock lobster, marron, abalone and crabs, and recreational netting. The cost represented about 33 per cent of the enforcement division's total expenditure covering compliance of recreational, commercial and foreign fishing.

The enforcement costs of providing law and order have not been included in Table 1 as it is the committee's belief that these should be borne by the state.

Table 1
Recreational fishing management costs

	Consolidated revenue fund	Fisheries research and development fund	Total
	\$	\$	\$
MANAGEMENT			
Recreational strategy		45 904	
Grants to WARSFC		22 336	
Data analysis		1 634	
Policy development	67 500		
	<u>67 500</u>	<u>69 874</u>	<u>137 374</u>
PUBLICITY & EXTENSION			
Production Fisherpersons guide		17 192	
Recreational fishing strategy		44 171	
Marron public education		46 621	
Publicity development	53 817	28 777	
Recreational fishing guides	<u>50 000</u>		
	<u>103 817</u>	<u>136 761</u>	<u>240 578</u>
RESEARCH			
Freshwater (marron & trout)	93 499	7 946	
Scalefish	76 678	63 483	
Abalone	2 390		
Rock lobster	<u>17 188</u>	<u>6 373</u>	
	<u>189 755</u>	<u>77 802</u>	<u>207 557</u>
Licensing administration	<u>221 633</u>		<u>221 633</u>
TOTALS	<u>582 705</u>	<u>284 437</u>	<u>807 142</u>

In preparing an indicative budget to meet the costs of new programs identified for recreational fishing, the committee is mindful that ultimately this responsibility will rest with a future recreational fishing advisory committee (see Table 2).

For future policy development to be effective an executive policy person will be required to support the new committee and regional liaison committees. Policy development and review will be necessary to deal with the issues of access, resource sharing and fishing rights identified in this report.

The appointment of education officers will also be key in ensuring support for volunteer community fishing liaison appointees and fisheries enforcement staff. Similarly, they will contribute towards the effectiveness of fishing clinics and new education programs.

The proposed changes in management rules for many of our finfish will also require consistent and continuing public education and advice so that they will be understood and heeded.

The costs of consultation requirements must also be met to ensure that peak body representation is willing and effective.

In the area of research, the appointment of a full-time recreational fisheries research scientist and supporting technical staff is essential for the establishment of a recreational fishing data base, and to provide for stock assessment and biological studies encompassing important recreational species.

Funding will be required for commercial fishing licence buyback schemes, fish enhancement programs, and new fishing facilities. Provision for this will enable the establishment of a reserve fund so that major projects of benefit to recreational fishers can go ahead as funds allow.

In establishing this indicative budget, the committee is concerned that money raised from new licensing will not be substituted for programs now met from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. All future licensing revenue should flow into a specific Recreational Fishing Trust Fund.

Costs of law and order enforcement must continue to be met by the state.

The indicative budget set out in Table 2, while based on projected costs for 1991/92, cannot be met until at least 1992/93. After the Government has considered the recommendations in this report, Parliament will need to make changes to the Fisheries Act before the committee's proposed licensing and administrative framework can be implemented.

Table 2
Projected costs of new and current
recreational fishing programs

	Year 1
	\$
1. Management	
Recreational fisheries management officer & policy development support	160 000
RFAC representation costs	50 000
Regional committee support	20 000
WARSFC - operational grants	<u>100 000</u>
	330 000
2. Publicity and extension	
Education officers	152 000
Publicity development	92 000
Fisherperson's guide for schools	20 000
Recreational fishing guides	100 000
Fishing clinics	100 000
Community education	150 000
Signage	<u>20 000</u>
	634 000
3. Research	
Ongoing research, marron, rock lobster, scale fish	200 000
Specific recreational research program	185 500
Trout enhancement	20 000
Other (creel census, specific program research)	<u>100 000</u>
	505 500
	500 000
4. Capital reserve fund for facility, stock enhancement, licence buyback etc	
	550 000
5. Licensing administration	
Total	<u>2 519 500</u>

In preparing Table 2, the committee recognised that funds sourced from the Fisheries Research and Development Fund come directly from commercial fishing licensing.

Therefore it would be reasonable to expect that recreational fishing costs met by that fund would in future be borne by a similar Recreational Fishing Management Fund.

The costings in Table 2 take into account programs funded in 1989/90 from the Fisheries Research and Development Fund. The requirement for recreational fishing in WA, excluding funds for law and order, is estimated to be \$2.519m, which includes licence revenue collection costs of \$0.55m in the first year.

The budget as projected places a strong emphasis on education, research and effective community representation in future policy development for recreational fishing.

Existing recreational fishing licences generate about \$626 000 a year to consolidated revenue. It is estimated that the six categories of recreational fishing licences recommended in this report will generate about \$1.2m in additional revenue.

The committee has used the 1987 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of recreational fishing to estimate revenue from licensing. Fuller details of these estimates are specified in Table 3.

The use of Australia Post computer counter facilities, as suggested in Recommendation 57, will allow for cost effective issue of licences from over 400 outlets, as well as providing a better service to the public. A significant number of Australia Post outlets will be able to issue licences on weekends as well as weekdays.

Direct licensing issue costs by the Fisheries Department during 1989/90 have been estimated to average about \$4.25 per issue. Under the Australia Post system this could be reduced to about \$3.20 per licence, giving a total collection cost of between \$500 000 and \$550 000.

The final collection cost would be dependent on the number of licences issued and number of people who used Australia Post services instead of the Fisheries Department. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) estimate of the numbers fishing for abalone, crabs and prawns has been discounted as some fishers may decide not to fish rather than pay a licence fee for recreational fisheries management.

The estimated revenue from licence collection after adjusting for pensioners, seniors card holders and rebates for children is \$1.8m.

Table 3
Estimate of licensing and revenue

	No. in licence category	Proposed fee \$	Gross revenue \$
Rock lobster (1)	20 000	20	400 000
Netting (1)	12 000	15	180 000
Marron (1)	20 000	15	300 000
Trout & freshwater angling (2)	9 000	15	135 000
Abalone	*6 000	15	90 000
Crabs & prawns	*86 000	10	860 000
Total	153 000		\$1 965 000
Less allowance for children/pensioner rebates			165 000
Total			\$1 800 000

* Estimate derived from ABS 1987 recreational survey discounting half of those who fished for less than five days.

(1) Estimate derived from 1990/91 licensing.

(2) Estimate derived from research data.

This leaves a shortfall of about \$0.719m towards meeting the identified needs of recreational fishing.

The deficit in funds available provides the basis for the committee requesting that, as a second approach, the State Government seek funds from the Commonwealth to help offset WA's costs in managing recreational fishing.

There is a significant case for Commonwealth grant funding, noting that the deficit on funding needs does not take into account the substantial law and order costs already met by the WA Government or the additional needs strongly identified in this report and by the community.

The case for a Commonwealth contribution to recreational fisheries management can be argued from the premise that the states cannot at present efficiently or effectively extract a licence fee from saltwater anglers. Similarly, it is extremely difficult for the states to achieve any reimbursement of costs from external beneficiaries such as tourist-related industries which benefit from good fisheries resource management.

It can be further argued that if the Commonwealth Government is serious about its desire for sustainable fisheries resource management, and the national development of tourism, it ought to provide significant funding for the management of recreational fishing.

Alternatively, the option remains open for the introduction of a service fee of about \$5 per licence issued so that the projected total funding requirements can be met.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Submissions received by the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

The Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee received three types of written submission: written submissions prepared by clubs and individuals; pro forma submissions prepared by regional advisory committees and various fishing clubs; and submissions made on a survey form completed by people attending public meetings held by the committee.

A total of 1448 submissions were received.

Written submissions

A total of 442 written submissions were received from individuals, groups clubs and other organisations.

Active Community Environmentalists Agnew, T F Albany Angling Club Albany Regional Recreational Fishing Council Albany, 40 Alison Parade Alison, 100 Avenue, Lower King Allan, J A Allen, R Andre, J G Angell, N Armstrong, A Arntzen, A N Aspland, S P Austin, S J Australian Anglers Association Australian National Sport Fishing Association (WA Branch) Avery, K Aylmore, M W Baker, S J Barlow, B Barrett, B B Bartle, R G (Ocean Reef Angling Club) Bartle, T M (Ocean Reef Angling Club) Bastholm, M Beech, R Bennett, R J Bennetts, K Bennetts, K Bentley, K Bianchi, P Bird, A	Bird, E Bishop, R J Black, R (4 Wheel Drive Club) Blake, J Blakey, J Blaxell, J Blinkhorn, J Blowfield, P Bolto, P L Bott, Mrs D G Bray, D M Breenen, S D Brennan, P British Sub-Aqua Club (WA) Bruboodjoo Point Action Group Buckley, K Bunbury & Districts Power Boat Club Burgess, B Busselton Naturalists Club Butler, J Campbell, R Caranna, A Carpenter, A Carr, H Carr, T Carrothers, B Carter, D H Caton, R A Cavana, M Central West Coastal Professional Fishermen's Association Inc Chappell, R Charlton, R Chessell Brown, J City of Cockburn	City of Fremantle Clarke, B A Clarke, W A Cleak, M & G Clifton, P Coastal Angling Club Cockburn Sound Conservation Committee Collie Undersea Club Collier, K H Collins, A J Collins, M Collins, M J Combs, H C Cook, W & G M Coombes, D Cooper, A G Cooper, F Cope, J L Count, Col M A Crake, E Cullen, T K Cunningham, T Curry, P Custom Net Works Cutts, J Davidson, M Davies, J Davies, T Daw, R Dawson, P S De Pledge, M Denford, Mr P (Boating Industry Association) Denholm, P Desmond, P Deuchar, C R
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Dielesen, P C
 Digney, S P
 Dobson, J R
 Dougan, I
 Doyle, P K
 Dragicevich, N
 Duffield, John
 Duffy, R
 Duke, C J
 Dunsborough & District
 Progress Association
 Dyer, L K
 Dyer, N J
 Dyson, W H & K J
 Earl, C R
 Edkins, C D
 Edwards, G S
 Edwards, P S
 Elward, D
 English, R
 Esperance Deep Sea Angling
 Club
 Esperance Surfcasters Club
 Evans, M C
 Ewing, R
 Ewing, W
 Fertch, J M
 Filmer, E J
 Fitzgerald, P
 Fitzhardinge, M
 Flint, B
 Foster, E I
 Fowler, D J & S H
 Fowler, R
 Fowles, M
 Fremantle Professional
 Fishermen's Association Inc
 Fremantle Sailing Club
 Fricker, E F
 Froud, P L
 Gascoyne Region Recreational
 Fishing Public Meetings
 Gascoyne Regional
 Development Committee
 Gascoyne Regional Travel
 Association
 Gaspar, J
 Gates, J
 Geraldton Angling Club
 Geraldton Mid-West Regional
 Recreational Fishing Liaison
 Committee
 Gibb, H
 Gibbons, R
 Gilbert, H
 Gilkinson, A
 Gilkinson, C
 Giltrap, J P
 Goldfields Esperance
 Development Authority
 Goodes, P
 Gough, C D
 Graham, K J
 Green, D G
 Grey, J
 Griffiths, G
 Griffiths, L
 Grove, M
 Guest, B
 Hainge F J & P F
 Halco Tackle Co
 Halse, Norm
 Hamilton, K L
 Harbord, Lindsay

Harbord, L and Turner, G.
 Harris, J W Dip L G
 Hawtin, Frank
 Hemingway, E G
 Heritage, T C
 Herlihy, A
 Hill, J
 Hill, P
 Hill, R
 Hillarys Yacht Club
 Hills Boating Fishing and
 Recreational Club
 Hoghes, K
 Holman, G
 Holme, K D
 Hoonhout, T
 Horner, A
 Horner, C A O
 Horner, N
 Horton, R
 Hunt, K E
 Hutcheson, A
 Ingram, D
 Irvin, R
 Jakens, Mr A B
 James, A W
 Jamieson, A H
 Jamieson, M A
 Jarratt, Mrs J
 Johnson, Mrs S L
 Jones, B
 Jones, M (Animal Liberation)
 Jones, R F
 Jovic, Z
 Kalgoorlie-Boulder Region
 Recreational Fishing Public
 Meetings
 Karniewicz, R B
 Kennedy, R
 Kerr, B
 Kerr, W O
 Keys, P
 Kimberley Aboriginal Law and
 Cultural Centre
 Kimberley Conservation Group
 Kimberley Recreational Fishing
 Advisory Committee
 King Bay Game Fishing Club
 King, J
 Kingdom, E R
 Knapp, S
 Kociuruba, W J
 Kowalski, P
 Kung, A
 Labianca, V
 Lancelin Angling and Aquatic
 Club
 Lawrie, S
 Leahy, E H
 Lee, D
 Lehoczky, E
 Lenke, K
 Lenson, R
 Leschenault Inlet Management
 Authority
 Lethby, T
 Lewis, D
 Lewis, T R
 Liddell, J W
 Lilford, H C
 Living Water Skin Diving Club
 Llewellyn, G H
 Love, E J
 Lovegrove, I

Lukey, Graeme
 M J & H Moylan Pty Ltd
 MacMahon, B A
 Major, K J
 Major, R C
 Mandurah Offshore Fishing
 Club
 Mathieson, J B
 Marden, T P
 Margaret River Volunteer Sea
 Search And Rescue
 Marmion Angling And Aquatic
 Club
 Marsh, R
 Martin, P & K
 Mas, Mrs S I
 Masters, H G
 Masters, Mrs J P
 Maunder, G
 May, T W
 McCarthy, R
 McFluenie, G H
 McGinniss Family
 McGlinn, G D
 McGlinn, Mrs S M
 McGockin, P
 McGowan and Armstrong
 MacIntyre, L
 McKay, G
 Meacham, P A (public petition)
 Meecham, P A
 Mieziis, I
 Miller, C J
 Milner, Mr & Mrs R M
 Milton, L
 Morhall, J
 Moritz, T
 Morris, W
 Morton, G E
 Mullewa Offshore-Onshore
 Fishing Club
 Muston, C
 Napier, B
 National Parks and Nature
 Conservation Authority
 Nelson, D T
 Nelson, Mrs I
 Neuteboom, E
 Newton, G
 Nor West Game Fishing
 Association
 Norman, Mr H J
 Northampton Fishing Club
 Northern Districts Angling Club
 O'Keefe, T J
 O'Shannessy, S
 Oates, W
 Ocean Reef Angling Club
 Offshore Angling Club of WA
 Offshore Angling Club of WA,
 Boating Branch
 Offshore Angling Club of WA,
 Mount Barker
 Orr, M
 Osborne, A
 Osborne, P
 Pallot, A
 Parks, S W
 Parry, G
 Passmore, T
 Pastime Angling Club
 Pearce, E J
 Peart, B
 Pemberton Angling Club

Pemberton, R N	Shire of Capel	Turner, G
Penny, A	Shire of Esperance	Van der Heide, W
Perry, G P	Shire of Exmouth	Vellacott, S R
Perth Divers Sub Aqua Club	Shire of Murray	Vincent, P G
Association	Shire of Pingelly	WA Professional Shell
Perth Game Fishing Club	Shire of Shark Bay	Fisherman's Association Inc
Pilbara Recreational Fishing	Shire of Waroona	WA Fishing Industry Council
Liaison Committee	Siesta Park Holiday Resort	WA Game Fishing Association
Pilkington, S	Singleton, P B	WA Recreational and
Polland, D	Small Craft	Sportfishing Council Inc
Pontin, S	Smith, L	WA Recreational Council
Poole, W J	Snell, G	WA Trout and Freshwater
Pope, T	South Coast Licensed	Angling Association
Powell, H N	Fishermen's Association Inc	Waite, J
Preston Beach Progress	South Coast Recreation	Walkey, C
Association	Association	Wallis, M
Public Petition, C/- Box 33	South West Recreational	Walpole Boating and Angling
Northcliffe	Diving & Fishing Association	Club
Raycraft, J	South West Region -	Walpole Tourist Bureau
Recreational Fishing Advisory	Recreational Fishing	Warburton, M
Committee Central Region	Advisory Committee	Watson, D
Rees, B A & M E	South West Sportfishing Club	Watts, P
Riley, E	South, G H	Weaver, P R
Roach, G	Stagles, I P	Wehlack, N I
Robinson, A J	Stathy, P A	Wellstead, Mrs J
Robinson, C	Steffanoni, J V	West Coast Sportfishing Club
Robinson, W	Stone, A (public petition)	Western Australian Tourism
Rose, F	Stone, R & G	Commission
Russel, K	Stretton, R J F	Weymouth, G
Ryder, G	Stuthens, B L	Weymouth, Mrs N
Saltwater Angling Club	Sumption, R Y	Weymouth, N
Sampson, Ian	Sumption, T	White, D
Sandalwood Farms	Surf Casting and Angling Club	Wilhelm, T H
Sanday, W S	of WA	Williams, H
Sandilands, M D	Sutton, R	Williams, S
Sanford, R G	Swan Brewery Angling Fishing	Williamson, M C
Scuba 2, The Club	Club	Wills, S G
Seaster, V	Swarrell, B	Windbush, A
Selim Processors	Thomas, T	Winfield, R K
Serls, E H	Thomson, W J	Winton, C E
Shenton Park Deep Sea	Thorpe, R W	Withnell, N E & M F
Angling Club	Travers, R	Wotherspoon, G
Sherwood, Mrs J	Tribbeck, R D	Wright, E
Shine, T J & M A	Tremsath, J F	

Pro forma submissions

Regional recreational fishing advisory committees and some fishing clubs prepared survey questionnaires for their areas and summarised the results for submission to the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee.

A total of 332 pro forma submissions were received.

Survey of key issues

A survey questionnaire was prepared by the Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee for completion by people attending regional meetings held throughout the state.

A total of 674 survey questionnaires were returned to the committee.

Appendix 2.

Schedule of public meetings 1990

TOWN	MEETING VENUE	DATE 1990	ESTIMATED ATTENDANCE
Esperance	St Johns Hall	14/8	35
Kalgoorlie	Western Mining Auditorium	21/8	26
Albany	St Johns Ambulance Hall	27/8	65
Collie	Community Centre	4/9	220
Bunbury	South West Italian Club	28/8	450
Busselton	Civic Centre	11/9	70
Mandurah	Senior Citizens Centre	21/8	75
Manjimup	Lesser Town Hall	14/8	45
Carnarvon	Recreation Centre	10/9	65
Geraldton	Public Chambers	11/9	120
Northam	Town Hall	17/9	35
Lancelin	Shire Hall	18/9	30
Jurien Bay	Town Hall	19/9	25
Leederville Fishing Clinic	Town Hall	18/7	200
Fremantle	Old Customs House	20/9	50
Perth Metropolitan (south)	Belmont Senior High	26/9	70
Perth Metropolitan (north)	Loftus Recreational Centre	27/9	70
Kununurra	Quality Motor Inn	15/9	20
Derby	Kimberley Motor Inn	13/9	18
Broome	Overland Hotel	14/9	18
Port Hedland	Civic Centre	13/9	60
Karratha	Shire Chambers	12/9	45
Denmark	Denmark Tavern	24/9	43
Gnowangerup	Sporting Complex	27/9	23
Hopetoun	Town Hall	4/9	14
Exmouth	Recreation Centre	17/9	35
Perth 4WD Club	AGM	27/9	50