



Response to Discussion Paper
"Towards a 10-year vision for recreational sea fishing in
Tasmania"
October 2020

Executive Summary

TARFish is the government recognised, independent peak body representing Tasmania's recreational marine fishers. Our goal is to protect, promote and create sustainable, accessible, enjoyable and safe fishing for the benefit of Tasmanians.

TARFish supports the development of an appropriate ten-year strategy for recreational marine fishing in Tasmania.

TARFish provides this response on behalf of the recreational fishing community.

The response aligns with the organisation's principles:

1. Fair and equitable access to well managed fisheries
2. Abundant fish stocks
3. Healthy habitats
4. Safe, easy and inclusive access
5. Robust science and best fishing practice

It is the view of TARFish that any strategy must deliver sustained access for recreational fishers by recognising their value. This is an opportunity for the government to demonstrate through decision making the worth of recreational fishing to the Tasmanian culture by maximising benefits to recreational fishers consistent with community values.

To demonstrate that value, the strategy must be adequately resourced. It must be inclusive to empower recreational fishers to participate in decision making and the sustainability of the fishery.

Summarised below are TARFish's recommended key initiatives that are discussed in more detail throughout the document. It is an expectation of the Tasmanian recreational fishers that these recommendations be given serious consideration and full force. To do otherwise denies the role of TARFish as their peak body representative and the voice of many Tasmanians.

Summary of recommended key initiatives

Outcome 1: Valuing recreational sea fishing

1. Development of binding access arrangements for key species
2. Enabling access to fisheries with quota arrangements
3. Protected access to emerging species such as snapper, king fish and King George whiting.
4. Development of a decision support tool or framework
5. Research that considers the aspirations of recreational fishers regarding the fishery being investigated
6. Development of fishery-wide research
7. Research that considers regionality and type of activity
8. Specific research to understand recreational fishing sectors

Outcome 2: Involving the community in fisheries management

1. A statement of reasons be provided for fisheries management decisions that specifically sets out how the views, advice and recommendations of TARFish and RecFAC have been considered and what weight has been given to them.
2. TARFish be given responsibility and resourcing to adequately consult with recreational fishers to bring those views forward in decision making with specific responsibility for educating and informing fishers regarding management of the entirety of a fishery.
3. Transparency regarding the expenditure and return to recreational fishers from licence fees and the ability to have input into their expenditure once administration fees are removed.
4. TARFish supports changes to funding of the organisation that allows it to be fully independent of Government.
5. TARFish supports changes to its rules and composition to better represent recreational fishers.
6. TARFish supports a genuine co-management approach to fisheries management be pursued.
7. The State Government coordinate a working group to review existing stewardship programs and develop a risk rated list of potential programs and funding options with a view to outsourcing, streamlining, and funding stewardship programs.
8. That research projects consider the opportunities for recreational fishers to participate through citizen science when the project or proposal is designed.
9. That data collected through citizen science programs be analysed and communicated back to recreational fishers.

Outcome 3: Making it easier for people to go fishing

1. Specific research project(s) that segment recreational fishers, understand fishing pathways, barriers to participation and other information that supports greater understanding of fishing access needs.
2. Research is used as a basis to inform development of a program to make fishing more accessible.
3. Changes to group fishing rules are piloted in two specific fisheries; scallop and rock lobster (pot only) and which are supported by research.
4. Direct engagement with SCBOOT and specifically fishing charter boat operators, to investigate the potential for a targeted strategy with

Tourism Tasmania that supports access to recreational fishing through charter boats.

5. Regional joint working groups be formed consisting of MaST, TARFish, and local councils in the region to develop a comprehensive facilities program.
6. Commercial fishing activity exclusion zone be applied around recreational fishing FAD's and artificial reefs.
7. A code of practice for fishing around FAD's and artificial reefs be developed.

Outcome 4: Promoting responsible recreational fishing

1. Development of a broad series of video content explaining methods, techniques and science for the recreational fishing sector and broader Tasmanian public. This would require significant additional funding to develop.
2. TARFish is best placed to further develop its position as the primary community recreational fishers communication source by building and disseminating factual information across the recreational fishing community.
3. TARFish develops a considered communication strategy to promote responsible recreational fishing informed by feedback received through the Recreational Fishing Survey and responses to the Discussion Paper.

Outcome 5: Ensuring the long-term sustainability of fish stocks and habitats

1. The commercial sector should be specifically excluded from emerging fisheries until there is sufficient scientific certainty regarding the nature and scale of the population.
2. Research should be communicated effectively using contemporary communication methods and communication planning built into all research proposals and budgets.
3. TARFish develop and maintain a current list of research projects relevant to recreational fishers that is publicly available.
4. A review of fishing activities that have high potential to impact non-target species
5. Development of guidelines for the specific fishing activity and equipment used to reduce impacts on non-target species
6. Appropriate and targeted fisher education programs to assist understanding of how to minimise impacts on non-target species that is relevant to the activity and preferred equipment used to undertake it.

7. Grandfathering existing gill-netting licences and ceasing to issue new licences
8. Evidence based management controls on high-impact fishing methods
9. Specific fisher education on the correct use of high-impact fishing methods to reduce incorrect use.

Outcome 6: Improving capacity to support recreational fishing

1. Investigate potential alternative funding options that also maximises the potential to leverage further cash and in-kind contributions
2. That the 10-year recreational fishing strategy is sufficiently resourced to be achieved.
3. Single entry portal and app for recreational fishers that includes well designed communication on everything from Notice to Mariners to research updates and fishing guides
4. Increased compliance checks by police or other authorised persons (e.g. fisheries officers, parks and wildlife officers)
5. Consider potential external partners to assist with service delivery.

Detailed response to discussion document

Vision

The draft vision is “To deliver the best recreational fishing to Tasmanians by ensuring sustainable fish stocks and optimising benefits to the community.”

TARFish is broadly supportive of the vision statement. The vision could however be more bold and TARFish suggest:

“To deliver the best recreational fishing to Tasmanians by ensuring; fair, safe, and protected access to abundant fisheries and healthy habitats consistent with community values.”

TARFish recommends the following changes to strengthen the management of fish stocks and benefits returning to recreational fishers.

1. Changing the word “sustainable” to “abundant.”

It is TARFish’s view that “sustainable” could allow fish stocks could be maintained at a level that allows the ongoing existence of a species but does not necessarily mean the stock is of a sufficient level to support long-term abundance. For recreational fishing, ensuring the abundance of a stock promotes a satisfying fishing experience.

What does “...optimising benefits to the community” mean? Is it “maximising benefits to recreational fishers consistent with community values”? As written, it is too broad and does not provide sufficient insight into what the benefits to community are. Perceived “community benefit” could in fact, be contrary to benefits to recreational fishers. Further, it suggests the government will give precedence to commercial considerations (for example) before recreational fishing. The first part of the vision to “deliver the best recreational fishing experiences...” is not necessarily enabled by optimising benefits to the community. The purpose of the strategy is to support recreational fishing and should be specific to that.

The vision is also silent on the following key elements:

1. Fair and protected access to well managed fisheries
2. Healthy habitats
3. Safe, easy and inclusive access

These elements are essential to the quality of the fishing experience and ensuring it can be maintained.

TARFish recommends the suggested alternative wording of the vision. The alternative aligns with TARFish’s priorities on behalf of Tasmania’s recreational marine fishers.

Outcome 1: Valuing recreational sea fishing

TARFish is generally supportive of Outcome 1: Valuing recreational sea fishing

TARFish notes that the discussion on this outcome refers to “optimising benefits to the community,” and we encourage consideration of TARFish’s alternative preferred vision statement that better recognises the value of recreational fishers.

With regard to the potential strategic initiatives, TARFish offers the following comments:

1. *Recognising the social and economic importance of recreational fishing in management decisions*

Acknowledgment of the long-standing perception of recreational fishers being undervalued is overdue and welcome.

TARFish recommends:

“Recognise and protect the cultural and social value and economic importance of recreational fishing.”

TARFish notes the three initiatives regarding the importance of recreational sea fishing proposed in the *For a Better Fishing Future Survey* (the survey). These were:

1. Recognising the social and economic importance of recreational fishing;
2. Recognising the importance of new species such as snapper, kingfish and King George whiting to recreational fishers; and
3. Better recognising the importance of recreational fishing when managing fish stocks and fishing areas.

Whilst these initiatives received strong support through the survey, it is less clear if alternatives were provided and considered or the implementation of the initiatives.

Additionally “recognising” importance does not necessarily require management decisions to actively protect recreational fishing. This is in contrast to many commercial fishing regulations and other management tools that serve to enshrine access – the commercial abalone deed of agreement is one example and the commercial quota system for a range of other important species such as rock lobster and scallop are others.

It is TARFish’s strong view that the government’s strategic initiatives must not only “recognise” but specifically protect the value of and access to recreational fishing.

In strengthening the outcome in this way, recreational fishers are assured that any decisions must not only “recognise” but actively protect access to the activity and to the species sought.

TARFish notes that a range of suggestions were made through the survey with regard to this initiative. Specifically, recreational fishing only areas in

sheltered or coastal areas and development of decision support frameworks for recreationally important species.

The supporting initiatives of Strategic Initiative 1 are not supported by TARFish as they are too general in nature and broad in interpretation to have sufficient confidence that they will be given effect in a manner that would be supported by recreational fishers.

TARFish recommends alternative initiatives below:

1. Development of binding access arrangements for key species

This may include but is not limited to; recreational-only fishing areas, mainly recreational areas, first access to compromised fisheries where commercial over-fishing has impacted the sustainability of the fishery – for example, this may be through season timing or through applying catch reductions to the commercial sector before the recreational sector particularly when the recreational sector take is less than 10% of a fishery.

2. Enabling access to fisheries with quota arrangements

In some instances, recreational fishers have been provided an effective “quota” for a fishery. Rock lobster and abalone are examples of this. Notably, in both of these fisheries, recreational fishers typically catch well below their allocation. The broad scale application of this system does not sufficiently account for the nature of the activity in that it is typically conducted in in-shore waters, close to home, shack or holiday areas and undertaken in small vessels unsuited for long-distance fishing.

To enable greater access to the recreational sector’s allocation whilst reducing the risk of localised depletion, finer scale management is needed. This may include but is not limited to; recreational fishing only areas for target species (this could be permanent or only when the recreational season is open) and preferential quota allocation in locations that are preferred by recreational fishers.

3. Protected access to emerging species such as snapper, king fish and King George whiting.

It is important the precautionary principle is applied to emerging fisheries. This may include specific prevention of commercial activity, limiting catch by the commercial sector, and “no-take” in mainly recreational areas until there is sufficient certainty of the size and nature of the emerging populations.

4. Development of a decision support tool or framework

To ensure the strategic initiatives are sufficiently flexible to consider issues or needs that are yet to be identified, the development of a decision support tool or framework would ensure that fair and protected access is a mandatory consideration in future decision making. This is particularly relevant when there are multiple users and/or pressures on a fishery or there is uncertainty regarding the nature of the fishery (e.g. emerging species).

2. Research into the social and economic contributions of recreational fishers

TARFish is supportive of the need for research-driven decision making. The collection of socio-economic data is essential to recognising the value of recreational fishing in decision making. It is TARFish's view that "value" is the necessary term to be considered rather than "contributions". Using the term value allows greater consideration to the importance the sector and broader community place on the activity.

It is important that when considering the value of the sector that the aspirations of the recreational fishing sector are considered. TARFish would welcome the development of future trends and forecasts be included in research to better understand the future needs of the sector.

TARFish supports the need to develop multi-user research for specific species and areas, especially when there is existing or potential for conflict amongst user groups. Further, in undertaking research that informs the entirety of a fishery, it follows that there would be a greater understanding of the fishery amongst all users.

TARFish considers there are instances where research needs to better understand regionality and the type of activity (e.g. game fishing). There is also a need for more specific research that assesses user groups within the recreational fishing sector rather than the sector as a whole. TARFish develops the need for research that understands recreational fishing sectors or sub-groups under Outcome 2, proposed strategic initiative 1.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

5. Research that considers the aspirations of recreational fishers regarding the fishery being investigated
6. Development of fishery-wide research
7. Research that considers regionality and type of activity
8. Specific research to understand recreational fishing sectors

Outcome 2: Involving the community in fisheries management

TARFish supports greater involvement of recreational fishers in the overall management of fish stocks. TARFish notes that survey responses indicate that the involvement of TARFish in managing fisheries is not well understood.

With regard to the potential strategic initiatives, TARFish offers the following comments:

1. *Involving fishers more in managing fisheries, including taking responsibility to protect them*

Currently, there are insufficient opportunities for recreational fishers to be actively involved in fisheries management decisions, including through their representative body, TARFish.

In addition, for recreational fishers to “*take responsibility to protect them*”, there must be the capacity to make decisions regarding the fishery. If the intent of the statement is to take personal responsibility at an individual level then TARFish would contend that there is insufficient communication and education currently to assist fishers to do this.

This is the result of a number of factors which are set out below.

Fisheries management and stewardship are separate concepts.

The first, particularly when considered in the context of co-management implies that recreational fishers will have decision making capacity as it relates to fisheries management which under the current structure they do not, either through the peak body, TARFish, or the Ministers Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee (RecFAC). Both organisations are offered the opportunity to comment, provide advice or make submissions to government as the fisheries managers but what is clear is that there is little or no meaningful information on how the representations are considered when final decisions are made. Similarly, co-management of fisheries between multiple sectors is rare and sporadic in nature. There has typically been a sectoral approach to fisheries management. There are effective ‘walls’ between competing users of a fishery that prevents understanding of the complex nature of the users requirements which leads to distrust and there is a pervasive view amongst recreational fishers that decision making commonly prioritises commercial interests over those of recreational fishers as a result of this approach. This view is then compounded by the absence of meaningful information being circulated into the recreational fishing community in a timely and relevant fashion to facilitate greater understanding and participation in decision making.

It is TARFish’s view that this is an area that can be dramatically improved through greater planning for communication around decision making and better resourcing.

The current funding arrangements, composition of and rules governing TARFish do not support an inclusive, representative approach to co-management. This is further exacerbated by the scope of the organisations role when considered in a fisheries management context. For the commercial sector there is a representative organisation for each sector, a couple of examples include; Tasmanian Abalone Council, Tasmanian Rock Lobster Fisherman’s Association (TRLFA), Oyster Growers Association, and Tasmanian Salmon Growers Association (TSGA). They are also supported by a peak body in the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council (TSIC). The recreational fishing

sector is required to be across each of these fisheries to the same level as the specific commercial sector body whilst representing and being required to communicate with 100,000 recreational fishers of diverse backgrounds and levels of engagement. The low funding level provided by Government effectively limits the peak bodies ability to undertake its functions even under its current rules and purposes and means that a potential future co-management approach needs to ensure that recreational fishers can be adequately represented. This issue is developed further under Outcome 5.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

In the short term;

1. TARFish supports a statement of reasons be provided for fisheries management decisions that specifically sets out how the views, advice and recommendations of TARFish and RecFAC have been considered and what weight has been given to them.
2. TARFish be given responsibility and resourcing to adequately consult with recreational fishers to bring those views forward in decision making with specific responsibility for educating and informing fishers regarding management of the entirety of a fishery. This could be facilitated through the development of a comprehensive communication strategy and plan together with resourcing to assist facilitate communication and engagement.
3. Transparency regarding the expenditure and return to recreational fishers from licence fees and the ability to have input into their expenditure once administration fees are removed.

In the medium term;

4. TARFish supports changes to funding of the organisation that allows it to be fully independent of Government. TARFish recommends that it undertake a review of potential funding models and bring forward a proposal to government to ensure that the organisations independence can be assured, and adequate resourcing secured to deliver effective representation for recreational fishers. Options to be considered may include: direct funding from licensed fisheries, levies on recreational boating licence fees, and membership fees.
5. TARFish supports changes to its rules and composition to better represent recreational fishers. TARFish recommends it undertake a rules review and develop a proposal to transition the organisation to a more representative model. Options to be considered may include; Board Member elections from membership, specific regional representation, and establishment of specific fisheries management advisory groups.
6. TARFish supports a genuine co-management approach to fisheries management be pursued.

Regarding stewardship and recreational fishers taking responsibility to protect fisheries TARFish offers the following comments:

Personal action and stewardship to protect fisheries relies on the education of recreational fishers to understand what actions can be taken, how their actions can benefit a fishery or the activity more broadly and finally to be provided information on the collective impact of personal actions over time. This requires a combination of effective education and regular communication and updates. The current communication with recreational fishers in this regard is particularly poor, lacks a clear purpose and coordinated approach. A notable exception to this is the Tuna Champions program. It is TARFish's view that there are a number of valued fisheries, topics/issues and specific recreational fisher segments that warrant dedicated stewardship programs.

The current piecemeal approach is compounded by the fractured nature of funding sources with funds potentially sourced from state government (direct funded), licence fees, research extension activities, government grant programs and other sources such as sponsorship.

TARFish also considers that governments generally are not necessarily the best placed or most efficient way to deliver those programs. In other jurisdictions, such as Western Australia and Victoria, similar programs are undertaken by the state recreational fishing peak body. Similarly, in Tasmania, organisations such as NRM South undertake stewardship programs regularly and is a model that could be adopted for marine recreational fishing. There are opportunities for multiple organisations to be considered including TARFish, OzFish, or partnership approaches with a range of not-for-profit organisations.

TARFish recommends the initiative below:

7. The State Government coordinate a working group to review existing stewardship programs and their efficacy, need, and fit for purpose together with developing a risk rated list of potential programs and funding options with a view to outsourcing, streamlining, and funding a well-supported range of stewardship programs.

2. Involving fishers more in citizen science

With around 100,000 recreational fishers undertaking the activity each year, the potential and scope for citizen science is vast. Participation in citizen science is often a key link to stewardship and in this way TARFish is very supportive of increasing the opportunity for recreational marine fishers to participate. As the peak body, TARFish is well placed to assist with communication with recreational fishers to support citizen science programs.

TARFish recommends the initiative below:

8. That research projects and programs that seek the support of recreational fishers or are for the benefit of recreational fishers specifically consider the opportunities for recreational fishers to

participate through citizen science when the project or proposal is designed.

9. That data collected through citizen science programs be analysed and communicated back to recreational fishers.

Outcome 3: Making it easier for people to go fishing

TARFish strongly supports initiatives that makes it easier for people to go fishing and welcomes the positive initiatives suggested through the survey by recreational fishers. However, there is a gap in understanding that needs to be better informed and consultation undertaken before deciding on a program of initiatives to be supported.

In response to the potential strategic initiatives, TARFish offers the following comments:

1. Program Support to make fishing more accessible

TARFish is not aware of any research that attempts to effectively segment recreational fishers, understand their needs, wants and drivers coupled with barriers. For example, the 2017-18 Survey of Recreational Fishing in Tasmania (Lyle, 2019) (the Recreational Fishing Survey) identifies participation sharply declines in the 60 plus age group. An understanding of why that occurs is not clear. Similarly, there is anecdotal evidence the provision of toilet and other facilities might remove a barrier to participation for women and families. TARFish would strongly support a research project or projects that aim to better understand recreational fishers, their drivers, barriers to participation and what the activity is in competition with or complimentary to (e.g. what else do recreational fishers do when recreational fishing such as camping, bush walking, kayaking) and who else is relevant to participation such as friends and family. In addition, TARFish is not aware of any current research that seeks to understand fishing pathways, that is, are there common themes or experiences that lead to initial participation and continued fishing or changes to types of fishing (e.g. shore to boat) over time.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

1. Specific research project(s) that seeks to segment recreational fishers, understand fishing pathways, barriers to participation and other information that supports greater understanding of fishing access needs.
2. Research is used as a basis to inform development of a program to make fishing more accessible.

2. Making fishing easier by changing group fishing rules

TARFish supports recognising group fishing activities noting the recent IMAS survey indicating that sharing catches with other licence holders is quite common and considered to be acceptable providing individuals do not

exceed possession limits. The Recreational Fishing Survey also showed that motivations based around social interactions (“to spend time with family” and “to spend time with other friends”) were rated very highly.

TARFish also strongly supports initiatives that make fishing safer and changing group fishing rules may assist in improving safe behaviour, particularly for diving.

Noting the earlier recommended research initiative above, it is important that impacts on participation because of changes to group fishing rules are well understood.

TARFish notes that there are likely to be complexities around compliance and monitoring and therefore recommends that any changes to group fishing are first piloted in licensed fisheries.

TARFish recommends the initiative below:

3. Changes to group fishing rules are piloted in two specific fisheries; scallop and rock lobster (pot only) and which are supported by research. This will enable the success or any unintended consequences to be monitored and used to guide changes in any other fisheries.

3. Targeted promotion of Tasmania as a fishing tourism destination and charter fishing

The Sea Charter Boat Operators of Tasmania (SCBOOT) are a founding member of TARFish. Recreational sea charters provide safe access to fishing experiences that may otherwise be difficult to access. An example of this is game fishing. However, there is a wide range of operators in the sector and it is important that they are directly consulted.

Broadly speaking, TARFish believes the sector would welcome the opportunity to investigate the potential for a targeted, sector specific strategy with Tourism Tasmania.

TARFish recommends the initiative below:

4. Direct engagement with SCBOOT and specifically fishing charter boat operators, to investigate the potential for a targeted strategy with Tourism Tasmania that supports access to recreational fishing through charter boats.

4. Enabling fishing access through providing and improving facilities

TARFish strongly supports enabling fishing access through providing and improving facilities. The provision of facilities is dispersed amongst MAST, Local Councils, Crown Lands and a range of other government agencies.

As noted in the response to potential strategic initiative 1 of this outcome, it is extremely important to understand the needs, wants and drivers of recreational fishers coupled with barriers. TARFish would strongly support a research project or projects that aim to better understand recreational fishers, their drivers, barriers to participation and what the activity is in

competition with or complimentary to (e.g. what else do recreational fishers do when recreational fishing such as camping, bush walking, kayaking).

MAST has a rolling 5-year infrastructure plan, Local Councils have strategic plans, township plans, recreational plans and tourism plans and it is important that there is a process that brings together the relevant parties with the right information in order to develop a state-wide plan for facilities.

A piecemeal approach to facilities will potentially disadvantage some regions or user groups.

Regarding FAD's, TARFish supports their deployment and notes that the first FAD's are imminent. To ensure that the FAD's are performing well and as intended, TARFish would welcome research that allows direct fisher participation (citizen science). In addition, as FAD's are new to Tasmania, it is important that they are not used to aid commercial fishing activity and TARFish supports a commercial exclusion zone around FAD's. In addition, to ensure the safe and enjoyable use of FAD's TARFish believes a code of practice of guidelines around fishing any FAD's be developed.

Similarly, artificial reefs for the specific purpose of supporting recreational fishing should be protected from commercial fishing efforts as FAD's should be. In addition, given artificial reefs may take time to establish, guidance around fishing activity for new reefs should be provided.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

5. Regional joint working groups be formed consisting of MaST, TARFish, and local councils in the region to develop a comprehensive facilities program. The development of the program should be supported by an effective recreational fisher and wider community engagement program at a regional level to inform the process.
6. Commercial fishing activity exclusion zone be applied around recreational fishing FAD's and artificial reefs
7. A code of practice for fishing around FAD's and artificial reefs be developed

Outcome 4: Promoting responsible recreational fishing

TARFish welcomes the promotion of responsible recreational fishing and believes, as the peak body, that TARFish can provide a leading role in this area.

In response to the potential strategic initiatives, TARFish offers the following comments:

1. Making it easier to follow the rules

TARFish supports reducing the number of changes to fishing rules as it would aid awareness of them over time. In some instances, changes are necessary to improve the abundance of fish stocks. This would suggest that current management is set at level to maintain many target species at a truly sustainable level.

However, TARFish would be concerned if rule changes were prevented in the interests of making compliance “easier.” There may be instances where more complex compliance measures are needed to meet the specific needs of the fishery. Compliance can largely be achieved through appropriate communication and belief by fishers that the measures are fair.

TARFish suggests that communication regarding fisheries rules needs to be tailored for specific audiences.

2. Increasing awareness of sustainable fishing practices

As noted in responses to Outcome 2 regarding stewardship and citizen science programs, TARFish believes there is significant opportunity to increase awareness of responsible fishing practices through a targeted series of stewardship programs. The specific recommended initiative by TARFish under outcome 2 is re-stated here:

The State Government coordinate a working group to review existing stewardship programs and their efficacy, need, and fit for purpose together with developing a risk rated list of potential programs and funding options with a view to outsourcing, streamlining, and funding a well-supported range of stewardship programs.

In addition, TARFish sees several immediate needs regarding sustainable fishing practices and they are:

- Promoting undervalued species to transfer pressure from heavily targeted species; and
- Reducing pressure on heavily targeted species through understanding of how current fishing practices are impacting the population

3. Increasing community understanding about how and why fisheries are managed

TARFish supports increasing community understanding about how and why fisheries are managed and believe that the need is urgent. Currently, the communication with recreational fishers, and that includes from TARFish, is not where it should be. It is not fast enough, not designed for multiple audiences and not often enough. There is also a “missing link” in understanding the entirety of a fishery – including the how and why for the commercial sector.

TARFish is of the view that it can play a bigger and more effective role in this area. TARFish would welcome the opportunity to consider the feedback received (at a thematic level) from this section in order to develop a considered communication strategy.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

In the immediate term:

1. Development of a broad series of video content explaining methods, techniques and science for the recreational fishing sector and broader

Tasmanian public. This would require significant additional funding to develop.

2. TARFish develop a considered communication strategy informed by feedback received through the Recreational Fishing Survey and responses to the Discussion Paper.

Outcome 5: Ensuring the long-term sustainability of fish stocks and habitats

TARFish supports initiatives that actively support abundant fish stocks and healthy habitats.

As noted in earlier responses, including to the proposed vision, TARFish is of the view that the aim should be for long-term abundance, not just sustainability of fish stocks.

In response to the proposed strategic initiatives, TARFish offers the following comments:

1. Research to support healthy recreational fisheries

Importantly, research needs to be targeted and specific to recreational fisheries and habitats and aid decision making for the benefit of recreational fishers. It is a commonly held view amongst recreational fishers that some research has unfairly implied that recreational fishers need to be more tightly controlled or have catches reduced due to a fishery being commercially overfished to an unsustainable level. It is TARFish's view research should not default to an equal sharing of management change recommendations when the base cause of the sustainability issues historically have not been significantly contributed to by recreational fishers but rather management decisions taken to enable the commercial fishery to fish down to sub-optimal levels.

Regarding emerging species, it is important to establish the nature of the fishery (is it established or transient) and the scale of the population to assist in management. In addition, where an emerging fishery has recreational limits placed on it to protect the fishery until more research becomes available, the commercial sector should be specifically excluded from the fishery until there is sufficient scientific certainty regarding the nature and scale of the population.

In its broadest sense, TARFish supports research that assists understanding of fish and their habitats to facilitate their long-term abundance.

Research also needs to be effectively communicated and understood amongst recreational fishers to aid in stewardship and understanding of decision making. Plain English, short summaries of research or other communication tools such as videos and animatics that aid understanding are needed. Research proposals and budgets should demonstrate how the audience will be educated and informed of the research.

In addition, the current research program of specific relevance to recreational fishers should be publicly available in a form that is easy to understand. TARFish would be pleased to provide this service.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

1. The commercial sector should be specifically excluded from emerging fisheries until there is sufficient scientific certainty regarding the nature and scale of the population.
2. Research should be communicated effectively using contemporary communication methods and communication planning built into all research proposals and budgets.
3. TARFish to develop and maintain a current list of research projects relevant to recreational fishers that is publicly available.

2. Reducing fishing impacts on non-target species

Reducing recreational fishing impacts on non-target species is fundamental to maintaining broad social acceptance. TARFish supports initiatives that reduce impacts on non-target species.

TARFish would welcome a coordinated approach to minimising impacts on non-target species that includes fisher education and equipment guidelines.

The proposals below also relate to the earlier response regarding stewardship.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

4. A review of fishing activities that have high potential to impact non-target species
5. Development of guidelines for the specific fishing activity and equipment used to reduce impacts on non-target species
6. Appropriate and targeted fisher education programs to assist understanding of how to minimise impacts on non-target species that is relevant to the activity and preferred equipment used to undertake it.

3. Assessing whether high impact recreational fishing methods should continue

It is important to balance the need to reduce high impact fishing methods with their cultural importance. A good example of this is gill netting. Changes to mesh sizes, set-time and areas have already reduced the impact of this fishing method. In addition, gill-netting is waning as a preferred fishing method as indicated by declining licences. This would indicate the overall impact of the activity has been reduced markedly in recent years. Any further changes need to consider the relative impact of further changes or bans.

One option that may be useful to consider is to grandfather existing licences and cease issuing new licences. This would facilitate the gradual phase out of the activity without disadvantaging those that continue to practice it. Alternatively, a 10-year lead time that sees the practice of gill-netting cease in 2030.

Regarding other methods such as long-lines, drop lines and seine netting, TARFish supports management that is guided by evidence. Specifically,

management decisions should target the specific issues associated with each fishing method.

Further fisher education regarding the correct use of these fishing methods is needed and will mitigate some of the concern expressed in the broader community.

TARFish recommends the initiatives below:

7. Grandfathering existing gill-netting licences and ceasing to issue new licences
8. Evidence based management controls on high-impact fishing methods
9. Specific fisher education on the correct use of high-impact fishing methods to reduce incorrect use.

Outcome 6: Improving capacity to support recreational fishing

TARFish strongly supports improving the capacity to support recreational fishing and is of the view that it has been chronically underfunded compared to other recreational activities over an extended period, particularly given a participation level of over 100,000 Tasmanians.

TARFish takes the opportunity to state that it does not support the implementation of a general marine fishing rod and line licence to improve capacity to support recreational fishing.

1. Identifying funding sources to improve programs and facilities that benefit recreational fishers

Recreational fisheries management has been supported by licence fees for specific fisheries and fishing methods. In 2019/20 licence fees were obtained from 19,370 licence holders, the bulk of which were for recreational rock lobster and achieving gross revenue of \$1,247,845. After deducting the \$255,000 contribution to consolidated revenue, \$992,845 was placed in the Fishwise Fund.

These funds have not been used exclusively for the specific management of the licensed fisheries. The funds raised cross-subsidise a range of activities to support recreational fishing generally including: Designing, developing and distributing communication products; Designing, printing and distributing 42,500 copies of the Recreational Sea Fishing Guide, Distributing fish measuring rulers, and Producing Regional Fishing Map pamphlets (aka Hot Fishing Spots). TARFish does not dispute the legitimacy of the activities but is concerned that the burden of their provision is placed on less than 20% of recreational fishers.

Tasmania's recreational fishers make an important contribution to the Tasmanian economy and particularly regional and coastal communities.

TARFish is of the strong view that additional, alternative funding is needed to support recreational fishers and achieve the Recreational Fishing Strategy.

Further, that the opportunity to leverage funds from the Federal Government, research organisations and other potential contributors is not being maximised as a result of the current structure for service delivery to the sector.

An example of an alternative model to improve services and programs for recreational fishing is NRM South. NRM South is provided \$350,000 in base funding annually and from that they leverage millions of in-kind contributions from that base funding each year to undertake programs and deliver services and community education.

However, TARFish does not have a fully formed view on potential options.

TARFish recommends the initiative below:

1. An investigation is undertaken into potential alternative funding options that also maximises the potential to leverage further cash and in-kind contributions
2. That the 10-year recreational fishing strategy is sufficiently resourced to be achieved.

3. Improving services to fishers by working closely with Inland Fisheries Service, MaST and Tasmania Police.

TARFish supports efforts to improve services to recreational fishers by streamlining government processes and closer working relationships between government agencies, particularly as it relates to licensing and compliance.

In terms of specific improvements, several options include;

- Single entry portal and app for recreational fishers that includes well designed communication on everything from Notice to Mariners to research updates and fishing guides
- Increased compliance checks by police or other authorised persons (e.g. fisheries officers, parks and wildlife officers)
- Sufficient resourcing of compliance functions.

In addition, TARFish encourages consideration of potential external partners to assist with service delivery. TARFish notes that OZFish has just established in Tasmania for example and that a number of habitat restoration projects are being undertaken through collaborations of groups of Not-For-Profit (NFP) organisations. It is TARFish's view that collaborative approaches to programs, projects and service delivery may provide increased efficiency and effectiveness, together with increased direct engagement with more recreational fishers.