

Fishing

What does the Outlook Report say about fishing?

Fishing on the Great Barrier Reef is an important pastime and source of income for both Queensland coastal communities and the Queensland seafood industry. This use of the Great Barrier Reef contributes strongly to the regional and national economy.

A viable commercial fishing industry depends on a healthy ecosystem. Likewise, Queenslanders rely on a healthy Reef for recreation and as a source of local seafood. They too are keen to ensure this natural resource remains healthy.

While the Great Barrier Reef is one of the best managed marine ecosystems in the world, it is clear that climate change is a major threat to its plants, animals and habitats. There is likely to be flow-on effects to the communities and industries that depend on the Great Barrier Reef.

It is likely that many aspects associated with fishing may be highly sensitive to climate change. There may be changes in fish abundance and survival, fish size and distribution (e.g. homing ability) as well as changes in cyclonic and storm activity that will affect fisheries resources. Fishers may also have to modify their fishing practices in response to disruptions to shallow-water nursery grounds (such as mangroves and seagrass beds), disturbance to coral reef habitats from more severe coral bleaching, more intense cyclones, altered species distribution from the effects of sea level rise and increasing sea temperatures and changing sea chemistry.

Climate change will impact on global fisheries production patterns and is likely to increase demand for wild caught seafood, including from the Great Barrier Reef, and are likely to drive a diversification of species targeted and locations fished.

Sustainable fishing is vital to the long-term future of both the resource and the community, and the industry is working with Marine Park managers, fisheries managers and research institutions to identify adaptation measures that will future-proof their industry.

How effectively is fishing managed in the Marine Park?

Fishing activities are required to comply with Marine Park zoning, and this results in about 67 per cent of the Marine Park being available for various types of fishing.

Fisheries are directly managed by the Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries. Commercial fisheries may also be required to meet national standards to gain approval for export of product under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*.

There have been significant improvements made in reducing the impacts of fishing in the Great Barrier Reef, such as by-catch reduction devices, effort controls, and the introduction of total allowable catches, revised possession and size limits and increasingly the adoption of tag and release fishing.

The Outlook Report identifies that although progress is being made towards best practice fisheries management, a number of risks remain. The high level risks identified are: extraction of top order predators (e.g. sharks), incidental catch of protected species and other species of conservation concern, illegal fishing (foreign and domestic) and death of discarded (by-catch) species. The Report also identifies that the limited information available means that the ecosystem level impacts of fishing are not well understood.

Fishing provides opportunities for recreation, resources for the seafood industry, and generates regional economic value.

This use of the Great Barrier Reef contributes in the order of \$290 million annually to the regional and national economy.

Product taken in the Great Barrier Reef Region is an important component of the Queensland seafood industry, with about 95 per cent of the reef line fishery, 60 per cent of the trawl fishery, 40 per cent of the net fishery and 40 per cent of recreational fishing taking place in the Great Barrier Reef Region.