

RECREATIONAL FISHING

Summary

Recreational fishing is an important pastime for many Australians and is one of the most popular activities on the Great Barrier Reef.

During the COVID-19 period, the economic contribution of recreational fishing was estimated to be \$1.5 million total gross state product, an increase of 0.4 per cent.

Independent reviewers found management effectiveness for fishing (both recreational and commercial) in the Region was mostly effective to partially effective.

What the Outlook Report 2024 says about recreational fishing

Most fishing occurred inshore (less than 5 kilometres from the coastline) with highest fishing effort in the Mackay and Cairns regions.

During the 2019–20 period, approximately 660,000 Queenslanders participated in 2.8 million days of recreational fishing; a slight increase in effort days from the surveys in 2013–14 and 2010–11. In 2023, coral trout was the most commonly harvested fin fish species from the Region by boat-based anglers. Mud crab is also frequently harvested from the Region.

Benefits of recreational fishing

Fishers derive benefits from recreational fishing including personal connection, enjoyment and wellbeing.

In 2019–2020, recreational fishing by residents in Queensland generated an estimated \$333.7 million in total gross state product throughout the State's economy (that is, including direct and flow-on contributions), \$209.5 million in total household income, and 3,136 jobs.

Impacts of recreational fishing

Recreational fishing can be a significant pressure on coastal fish stocks, with recreational harvest exceeding commercial harvest for some species. The increase in efficiency of recreational fishers through new technologies and changes to fisher behaviour, such as rapid information transfer via

social media, may alter the harvest profile of the fishery in the Region.

Between 3 and 18 per cent of recreational fishers admit to having fished in no-take Marine Park zones during the past year. Even low levels of poaching can have substantial impacts on fish populations and ecosystem health.

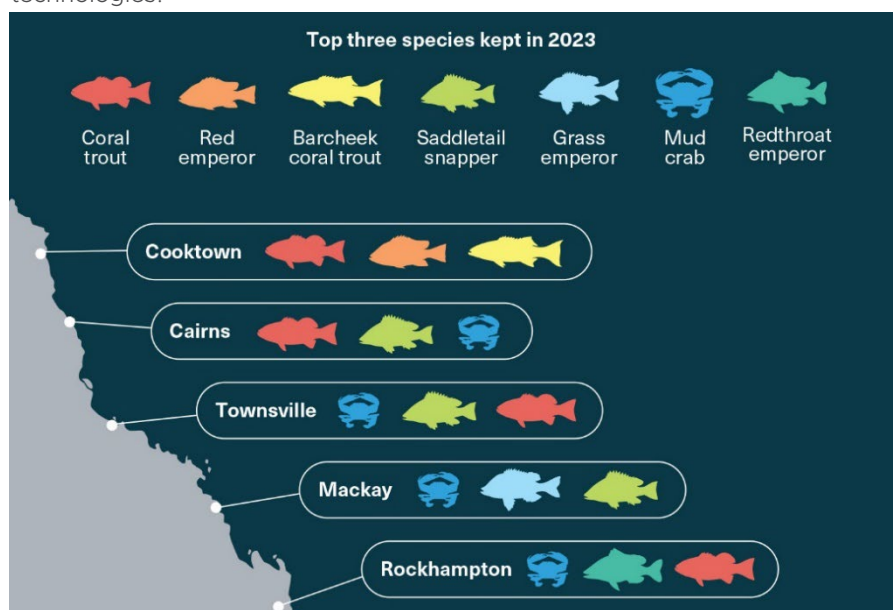
The number of reported offences has averaged around 670 each year since 2018–19. This is a 35 per cent increase since the preceding five years). The number of reported offences peaked at 814 during the COVID-19 pandemic, likely correlating to an increased number of people accessing the Reef. The increased non-compliance reports may also reflect improved surveillance efforts and technologies.

There are key gaps in understanding that relate to estimates of recreational take and associated impacts.

Management of recreational fishing

Fisheries management in the Marine Park is a shared responsibility between the Commonwealth and Queensland governments.

Significant management reform for fishing is being implemented through the Queensland *Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027*. Despite the high levels of investment in fisheries, outcomes for fishing remain only partially effective. Recreational fishers in Queensland do not require a fishing licence.



Top three species caught and kept by recreational fishers during 2023