



# The Coalition's Policy for a More Competitive and Sustainable Fisheries Sector

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## Key Points

Our nation's fisheries sector should be competitive and sustainable.

The fisheries sector should be supported and appropriately regulated by the Commonwealth, but it should not be vilified and undermined through government policies.

The Coalition's first act will be to abolish the carbon tax, which is hurting the fisheries sector and costing jobs.

We will take immediate action to restructure the Marine Bioregional Planning Process to address major community and industry concerns with Labor's mismanagement of the process.

The Coalition will immediately suspend and review the flawed management plans imposed by Labor without fair and adequate consultation and appoint a scientific panel to review the science on proposed boundaries.

We will restore confidence to the process and bring genuine consultation via the appointment of Bioregional Advisory Panels for each of the five marine bioregions. These Advisory Panels will provide advice on potential Marine Protected Areas and the design of management plans (including consideration of no-take zones). The Bioregional Advisory Panels will consult with the community and fishing industry on the restructure of the Marine Bioregional Planning Process.

The Coalition will reduce the regulatory burden on recreational fishers, commercial fishers and down-stream processors.

We will also reinvigorate the lines of communication between recreational fishers and government by establishing a Recreational Fishing Council.

The Coalition will make it easier for the fishing industry to employ new people and expand by abolishing the carbon tax, lowering the company tax rate to 28.5 per cent, and cutting red tape costs for business by \$1 billion a year.



# Introduction

The Coalition believes the fisheries sector is an important part of our economy.

Fishing plays an important role in Australia, supporting hundreds of coastal and river communities, bringing enjoyment to millions of Australians and helping Australia meet the national and global food task through the provision of a sustainable and quality protein source.

The commercial fishing sector is Australia's sixth largest primary producing sector, valued at over \$2.1 billion.

It is estimated that five million Australians participate in recreational fishing, spending \$10 billion each year in charter hire, fishing and boating equipment, travel, accommodation and bait.

Thousands of businesses are involved in the fisheries sector, including: charter operators, bait and tackle stores, outboard engine stores and boat dealers. They are critical to our national economy, to regional economies and to the tens of thousands of Australians they employ.

We understand the need for a balanced and informed approach to fisheries management.

But we do not believe in locking Australians out of their own oceans. We have some of the best managed fisheries in the world, which local fishers should be able to enjoy.

The fisheries sector should be supported and appropriately regulated by the Commonwealth – it should not be vilified and undermined through government policies.

We understand the importance the fisheries sector in securing Australia's food base, in generating valuable export income and in creating regional jobs and economic activity.

The Coalition will give the fisheries sector, including recreational fishing, the respect and recognition it deserves as a contributor to the environment, to healthy lifestyles and to the nation's economy.



# The Plan

## 1. Abolish the Carbon Tax

The Coalition will act immediately to rescind Labor's carbon tax.

This job-destroying tax is damaging for Australia's fishing businesses, many of whom are under severe pressure from overseas competitors who do not have to pay the tax.

It is implausible to suggest that the carbon tax benefits the Australian fisheries sector. It is a cost on business – a cost that is not borne by any of our international competitors. The carbon tax is a reverse tariff that destroys the competitiveness of Australian industry and costs Australian jobs.

The carbon tax has already led to:

- a \$9 billion a year additional tax on industry and households;
- a 10 per cent hike in electricity bills in the first year alone; and
- a 9 per cent hike in gas bills in the first year alone.

In 2011, a Senate Committee concluded that, based on Treasury modelling, the carbon tax would cut national income by \$1 trillion by 2050 – at an average of over \$40,000 per person in today's dollars.

The Coalition is determined to free Australian industry and households from the carbon tax that unnecessarily increases costs for businesses and families.

The carbon tax is an unnecessary cost to our fishing industry and fishing communities sector. It forces every fishing business and regional community to pay 10 per cent more in electricity prices and nine per cent more in gas prices – and this was just in the first 12 months of the tax.

## 2. Marine Bioregional Planning Process

The Coalition will immediately appoint an expert scientific panel to review the science supporting the boundary area for each zone.

The Panel will report within six months.

On receipt of the report, the Coalition will reconsider proposed boundaries in consultation with stakeholders. Our consultation will restore confidence in the process by bringing genuine consultation.



A Bioregional Advisory Panel will be appointed for each of the five marine bioregions. These Advisory Panels will provide advice on potential Marine Protected Areas and the design of management plans (including consideration of no-take zones). The Bioregional Advisory Panels will consult with the community and fishing industry on the restructure of the Marine Bioregional Planning Process.

The Coalition will require peer reviewed scientific evidence of threats to marine biodiversity to be made available to all stakeholders, including affected communities and industries, before any decision is made on future Marine Protected Areas (particularly any no-take zones).

In establishing Marine Protected Areas, the Coalition will consult closely with those people and industries that use the marine environment, including the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, to determine Marine Protected Areas management plans in accordance with relevant legislation and other regulatory frameworks. All Marine Protected Areas will be signed off by both the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts.

The Coalition will work cooperatively with all impacted communities and industries through the Bioregional Advisory Panels to develop socio-economic impact statements for each proposed Marine Protected Area.

World-leading and highly rigorous fisheries management regimes are already in place in Australian waters. Significant weight will be given to these existing and effective fisheries management plans when considering assessed areas.

The new Marine Protected Areas management plans to be developed will have the central aim of maximising marine biodiversity protection while also minimising the social and economic impact on the local fishing sector and onshore businesses. The Coalition will also ensure that these management plans are implemented over a reasonable period of time to assist with transitional arrangements.

### 3. Review and Streamline Regulations

The Coalition will cut the cost of red tape for businesses, including the fisheries sector, by at least \$1 billion a year.

We have identified a number of 'red tape busters' that will reduce the regulatory burden on recreational fishers, commercial fishers and down-stream processors, including:

- streamlining of regulatory audits required under the Food Safety and Export (administered by AQIS);



- encouraging mechanisms for mutual recognition of commercial and regulatory audits to reduce costs and inefficiencies of multiple audits;
- harmonising regulations and implementing more effective outcomes across agencies;
- harmonising conditions for compliance with environmental regulations for the establishment and operation of aquaculture enterprises across States and Territories;
- recognising recreational fishing licenses between States; and
- reviewing and simplifying regulations and levels of policing around management of introduced fish species.

#### 4. Australia's Seafood Task

The National Health and Medical Research Council has recommended an increase in the dietary intake of seafood.

With up to 70 per cent of seafood consumed in Australia being imported, it is vital that we ensure that we create a sustainable seafood supply.

Australia is recognised as having among the best management practices in the world for our wild catch fisheries.

The Coalition will continue to support a strong science based approach to wild catch fisheries management based on high quality research.

We also have rapidly increasing demand for farmed seafood with 43 per cent of all seafood consumed, coming from Aquaculture.

For example, the Tasmanian Salmon industry is estimated to exceed \$1 billion in value and other products such as oysters, abalone, and mussels are developing strong presence in the market.

To aid the development of the aquaculture sector the Coalition will work with industry to develop a national aquaculture strategy.



## 5. Improve Engagement with Indigenous Communities

The Coalition will work with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Indigenous Reference Group to better coordinate interaction between indigenous fisheries and broader fisheries management.

The Indigenous Reference Group has been established in recognition of the need to develop more effective communication with indigenous communities on fishing issues.

The Coalition recognises that while no single body can speak on behalf of all indigenous communities, the Indigenous Reference Group is well positioned to coordinate higher level issues and to promote the opportunities offered by organisations such as the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation.

## 6. Improve the Connection Between Science and Fishing

The Coalition will encourage and strengthen the connection between science and fishing through genuine consultation in the genesis of research projects and requiring a greater focus on research and development.

We recognise the need for strong links between science, research and development and fishing.

To meet the global food task our scientific effort must inform, and be informed by, the diversity of interests and views within the fishing industry.

## 7. Reinvigorate a Representative Body for Recreational Fishers

We will reinvigorate the lines of communication between recreational fishers and government by establishing a National Recreational Fishing Council.

The Council will include representatives of the recreational fishing sector.

## 8. Conduct Recreational Fishing Surveys Every Five Years

In conjunction with the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and Recfish, the Coalition will collect data on the social and economic impact of recreational fishing as well as obtain catch data to help assess stock levels.

This information will be made available to both policy makers and recreational fishing clubs and representative organisations.





## 9. Recognise OceanWatch as a Natural Resource Management Group

We will recognise OceanWatch as a Natural Resource Management group with responsibility for enhancing fish habitats and improving water quality in estuaries and coastal marine environments.

This will be achieved by working with industry and local communities to minimise environmental impacts to the marine environment and introducing industry and communities to sustainable technologies and behaviours.

## 10. Target Invasive Marine Species

The Coalition will provide \$5 million for a review and strategic analysis into invasive marine species with a view to removal or eradication of these marine pests.

The review will be conducted by the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and report within 12 months.

## 11. Assist Commercial and Recreational Organisations Adapt to National Maritime Safety Standards

The Coalition will provide up to a total of \$100,000 to assist relevant commercial and recreational fishing organisations meet the costs of interpreting and implementing these standards.

The Australian Maritime Safety Authority is currently working with Federal and State jurisdictions, through COAG, to develop national maritime safety standards.

Both the recreational and commercial fishing sectors are responsibly committed to the development and implementation of such standards.

## 12. Work to Develop Sustainable Mechanisms for Strong Representative Recreational and Commercial Fishing Bodies

The Coalition will provide \$1 million to support national recreational and commercial fishing peak bodies.

We understand the importance of recreational and commercial peak fishing bodies developing and promoting sustainable fishing practices. Our funding will support the development and promotion of sustainable fishing practices by peak fishing bodies.





### 13. Commit to Fighting Illegal Foreign Fishing

The Coalition is committed to maintaining all resources currently devoted to patrolling Australia's fishing zones.

We will ensure that resources devoted to patrolling illegal foreign fishing are not diverted to other activities. This includes ensuring the ACV Ocean Protector and/or its replacement is provided with sufficient funding to devote an adequate level of patrol days in Southern waters every financial year.

The Coalition will work closely and cooperatively with industry to ensure our patrol resources are located in the right zones at the right times.



## The Choice

Australians have a choice between a Coalition government which understands the need for a balanced and informed approach to fisheries management or a Labor Government which continues to neglect and harm the fishing sector.

The Labor Government has damaged the fishing sector by:

- stripping the national peak body, Recfish, of its funding;
- banning the fishing of mako and porbeagle sharks and then back-flipped following a national grassroots political campaign by recreational fishers;
- failing to tackle illegal foreign fishing in Australia's fishing zones, slashing funding for Southern Ocean patrols;
- threatening massive new no-take marine parks around Australia and allowing fringe environmental groups to unilaterally influence policy;
- failing to meet its own timeframes for declaring Marine Protected Areas; and
- failing to rule out large no-take zones within Marine Protected Areas currently being established across Australia.

The Labor Government has failed to consult with both the commercial fishing industry and recreational fishers on major changes affecting them. This is a failure that threatens jobs and the viability of many small businesses in coastal communities.

The Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has taken a hands-off approach to the Marine Protected Areas process and failed to represent the interests of the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

The 'lock-up' mentality of Labor completely ignores the fact that Australia's recreational and commercial fishers are dedicated to sustainability. Locking up marine areas without proper consultation or scientific assessment and throwing away the keys is neither responsible nor practical.

The Labor government has caused great uncertainty amongst stakeholders who will be adversely impacted by potential loss of access to resources within declared marine parks.



## Cost

The Coalition's Policy for Fisheries will invest \$9 million to ensure a more competitive and sustainable fisheries sector.





**THE NATIONALS** *for Regional Australia*

For further details of the Coalition's Plan go to  
[www.realsolutions.org.au](http://www.realsolutions.org.au)