

Review of the harvest of barramundi by nets in southeast Queensland

Discussion paper

This publication has been compiled by the Department of Primary Industries.

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The Department of Primary Industries proudly acknowledges Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Custodians of Country. We recognise their continuing connection to land, sea, waters and sky. We pay our respects to them, their cultures and their Elders past and present, and commit to ongoing reconciliation.

The Queensland Government is committed to providing accessible services to Queenslanders from all culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. If you have difficulty in understanding the, you can contact us for assistance, and we will arrange an interpreter to communicate the report to you.



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Have your say

The Queensland Government is seeking community feedback on a potential regulation change to prohibit the take of barramundi by commercial nets south of Tin Can Bay.

The fastest and easiest way to provide your feedback is to complete the online survey on our engagement hub.

The survey questions are also available at the end of this document if you would prefer to print the survey and post your submission to:

Review of barramundi netting in SEQ

Department of Primary Industries

GPO Box 46

Brisbane Qld 4001

Submissions close 5 pm, Saturday 31 January 2026.

NOTE: The survey questions are designed to seek your input – they are not a voting tool. Your feedback will be used to help develop options for fisheries management action and provide an insight into the preferences of all stakeholders.

Background

The East Coast Inshore Fishery is a complex, multi-species, multi-gear fishery that harvests approximately 100 species along the east coast of Queensland. It is split into five management regions (Figure 1), with the target species varying throughout the different regions of the fishery. The East Coast Inshore Fishery is the most diverse fishery in Queensland, with commercial, recreational, charter and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander fishers accessing these fish stocks.

Historically, there have been differences in target species between the south (management region 5), which accesses large catches of sea mullet, whiting, flathead, bream and school mackerel, and the north (management regions 1–4), which primarily targeted barramundi, king threadfin and grey mackerel.

In 2023, the then Australian and Queensland governments committed to phasing out gillnets in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area by 2027. As a result of this decision, on 1 January 2024, the former government retired the statewide N1 and N2 gillnet fishing symbols and introduced two new net fishery symbols, the NX in GBR waters, and the N15 in management region 5 which extends from Baffle Creek to the New South Wales Border.

These changes also allowed barramundi to be taken by commercial net fishing (Fisheries Symbols N15, N10 and K1-8) between Tin Can Bay and the New South Wales Border where previously this was not allowed.

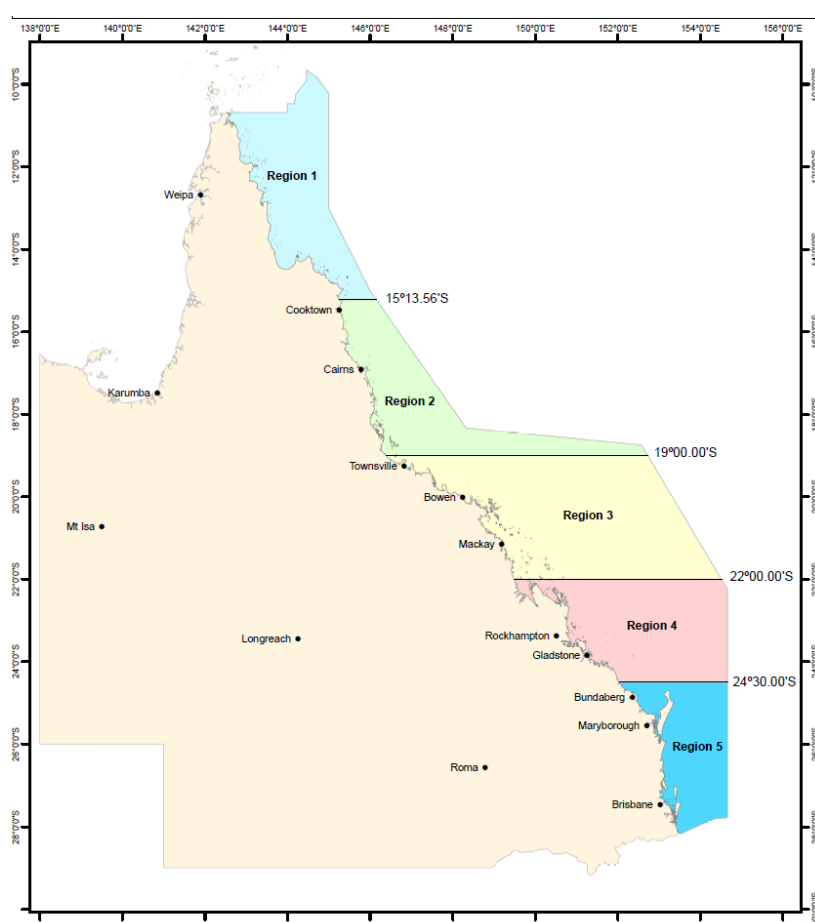


Figure 1 East Coast Inshore Fishery management regions

Barramundi

Harvest and management in the East Coast Inshore Fishery

Barramundi are regulated for both the recreational and commercial sectors through multiple harvest controls, called input and output controls. Input controls for this species include minimum and maximum legal sizes, gear restrictions, a closed season and recreational possession (5 per person) and boat limits (10 per boat).

To restrict the output commercially, barramundi is managed under a competitive Prescribed Commercial Catch limit (also known as a Total Allowable Commercial Catch limit) separate for each management region. Commercial harvest of barramundi along all regions within the east coast of Queensland has totalled 105 tonnes in 2025 and 63 tonnes in 2024. Within management region 5, commercial harvest has been around 8 tonnes in 2025 and 9 tonnes in 2024. Prior to the former governments change in 2024, barramundi encountered in nets from Tin Can Bay to the New South Wales Border could not be retained.

Catch estimates and information collected through recreational fishing surveys indicates very low levels of recreational harvest of barramundi in southeast Queensland. This information can be found on the Department of Primary Industries' [recreational fishing dashboard](#). It is noted that information submitted by recreational fishers to the Qld Fishing 2.0 app shows a number of fish are caught in rivers in southeast Queensland, however there is no mandatory requirement for recreational fishers to report their catch.

Limited available science on barramundi in SEQ

Biology

Barramundi (*Lates calcarifer*) is a diadromous species consisting of seven genetic stocks throughout all of Queensland. They are relatively long lived with some specimens reaching 20 to 35 years. They mature (mostly) as males first before changing into females and move between salt and freshwater during different parts of their life cycle. Barramundi populations are environmentally driven, with river-flow affecting their growth, survival, and catchability.

Stock assessments

Previous stock assessments for east coast barramundi have only provided spawning biomass estimates for 3 genetic stocks occurring from around Cooktown to Tin Can Bay. The area from Tin Can Bay to the New South Wales border has not previously had their populations assessed as there is insufficient information to determine the biomass of barramundi. Therefore, there is no scientific information available to determine the level of barramundi take that can be considered sustainable south of Tin Can Bay. Due to this, it is important to apply a certain level of precaution until science is available to support a decision.

Population dynamics

The current scientific evidence for barramundi stocks south of Tin Can Bay is inconclusive, and it remains uncertain whether this part of the region supports a self-sustaining population. This is further supported by the lack of evidence of juvenile barramundi in coastal waterways.

Further information

The government remains committed to supporting Queensland's commercial and recreational fishing sectors by only legislating scientifically backed changes to regulation. The government is now giving the public the opportunity to have their say through the attached survey.

Survey questions

Your say matters and we want to hear from you about your views on the management measures. The questions with an asterisk (*) are mandatory.

The Department of Primary Industries is collecting the information on this form to inform a regulation change to the take of barramundi in the East Coast Inshore Fishery management region 5 between Tin Can Bay and the New South Wales Border.

Your personal information will not be disclosed to any other parties unless authorised or required by law.

Question 1. Your information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode*: _____

Email address: _____

Question 2. What sector best describes your interest in the fishery?* *(Please select all categories that apply to you)*

- ☐ Commercial fisher
- ☐ Recreational fisher
- ☐ Seafood wholesaler/marketer
- ☐ Industry peak body (Please specify _____)
- ☐ Conservation sector
- ☐ Charter fishing operator
- ☐ Traditional fisher/Traditional Owner
- ☐ Hospitality (restaurant, café, fish and chip shop) owner/worker
- ☐ Fishing tackle retailer
- ☐ Interested community member
- ☐ Other (Please specify _____)

Question 3. Have you targeted barramundi or king threadfin between Tin Can Bay and the New South Wales border since 1 January 2024?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Further comments:

Question 4. Do you support the regulation change to prohibit the take of barramundi by nets between Tin Can Bay and New South Wales border?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Further comments:
