



Department of  
Primary Industries

## What will the survey results be used for?

The survey results will improve our understanding of the status of recreational fishing in NSW and the ACT and will be used in fishery stock assessments to ensure that our fisheries are managed on an ecologically, economically and socially sustainable basis.

To read a full version of the report go to [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/13-14\\_survey](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/13-14_survey)

Thanks to all the recreational fishers who willingly gave their time to participate in the survey.

ABS (2015) Catalogue No: 41770DO001

## Recreational fishing in NSW and the ACT

Results of a 2013/14 survey



Department of  
Primary Industries

13900\_MAY16

[www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au)



## What is the survey about?

The survey provides information about recreational fishing in 2013/14 by residents of NSW and the ACT, including:

- » How many people go fishing
- » Where they go fishing and what types of gear they use
- » How many and what types of fish are caught
- » Why people fish and what they think about fishing.

## Who was surveyed?

The survey was designed to provide a representative sample of recreational fishers resident in NSW and the ACT – from those who go fishing once a year to the very keen fishers who go whenever they can.

Over 9,400 households were contacted via a random telephone survey in early 2013 to measure participation in recreational fishing in the previous 12 months. Those households with an intention to fish in the following 12 months were then invited to take part in a diary survey and the fishing activities of nearly 1,700 households were monitored between June 2013 and May 2014. Over 11,800 fishing events were reported by more than 2,000 recreational fishers.





## Who goes fishing?

Recreational fishing continues to be a very popular activity with nearly 850,000 residents aged 5 years or more going fishing in the 12 months prior to June 2013.

This represents 1 in 8 (12%) of the NSW/ACT resident population and importantly, fishing is the third most popular outdoor recreational or sporting activity after walking/jogging for exercise and fitness/gym participation (ABS 2015).

More than twice as many males than females did some form of recreational fishing during the year.

Fishing was most popular among the youngest age group (5-14 years) with a participation rate of 1 in 5 persons (20%) in this age category.

The middle age group (30-44 years) had a participation rate of around 1 in 8 (13%), and the oldest age group (60 years or more) had the lowest participation rate – around 1 in 15 (7%).

## How much fishing?

Residents spent an estimated 3.2 million days fishing in NSW/ACT waters during 2013/14 – an average of 4.3 days per fisher.

Shore based fishing accounted for 59% of all fisher days and line fishing was the dominant fishing method at 93% of the total effort.

Seventy-nine per cent of all recreational fishing effort occurred in saltwater – primarily estuaries, followed by inshore and offshore waters. Over half of all freshwater fishing occurred in rivers, as opposed to lakes and dams.

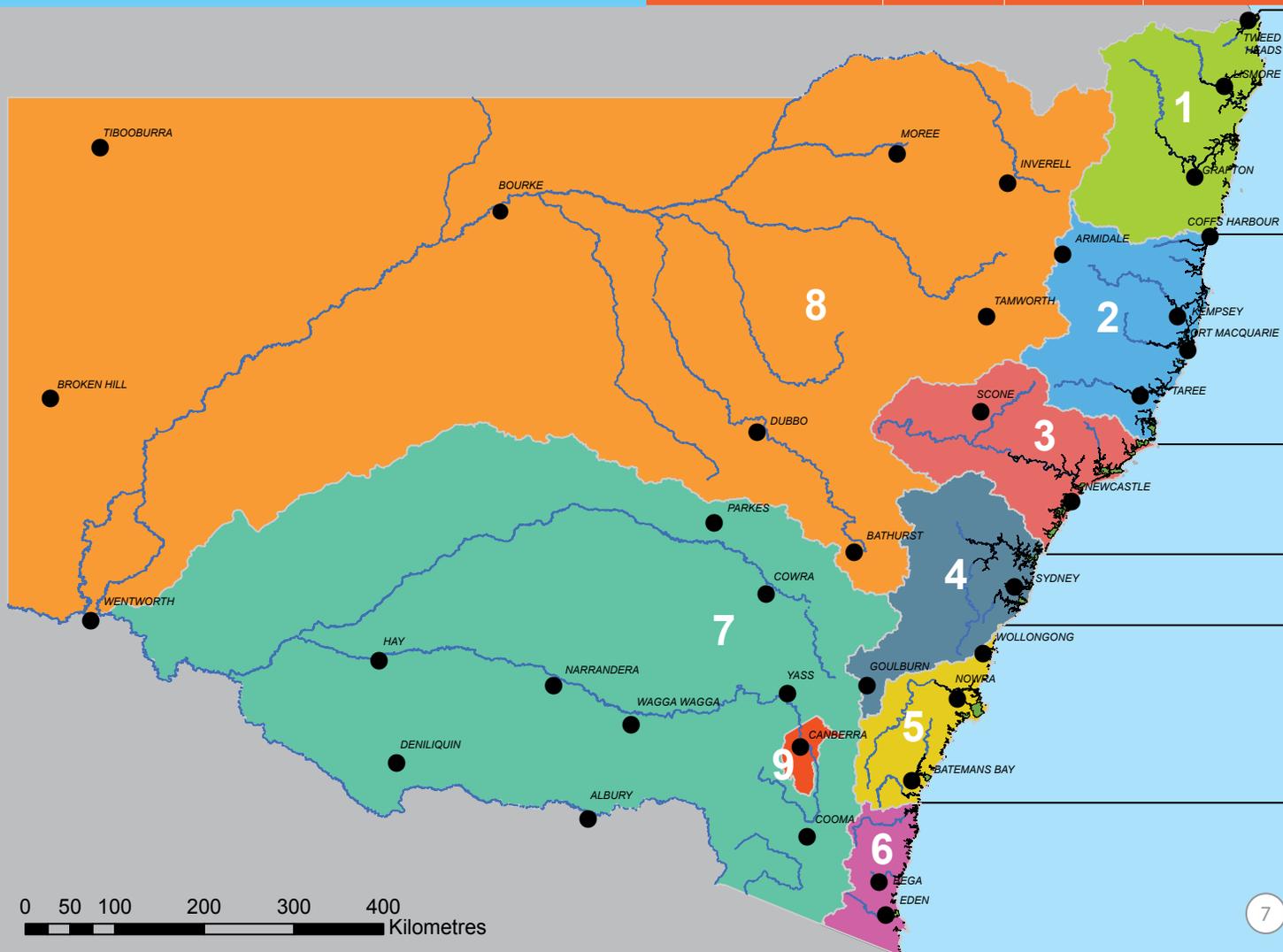
Also, 1 in 5 fishers (20%) accounted for about 60% of the total days fished – a typical feature of recreational fisheries in Australia and overseas.

## Where do they fish?

The coastal fishing zones accounted for the vast majority (84%) of all fisher days, with the Mid South Coast (22%) and Sydney (19%) having the highest activity levels. The three inland zones accounted for 16% of total fisher days, with the majority (10%) in the Murray/South West zone.

\* Many people fished in multiple regions during the survey

Fisher regions	No. fishers*	No. fisher days	% fisher days
1. North Coast	79,100	328,100	10
2. Mid North Coast	113,100	447,600	14
3. Hunter	149,700	474,700	15
4. Sydney	210,700	595,100	19
5. Mid South Coast	179,200	690,400	22
6. South Coast	42,200	128,900	4
7. Murray/South West	102,100	320,400	10
8. Darling/North West	57,900	191,200	6
9. ACT	3,600	5,700	<1



## ANNUAL CATCH OF KEY RECREATIONAL FISH SPECIES

### What's the catch?

Fish accounted for 75% of the total catch by numbers; followed by crustaceans (e.g. Prawns, Crabs) with 21% of the catch; Worms (2%); with Cephalopods (e.g. Squid, Octopus) and Molluscs (e.g. Pipsis, Abalone) at 1% each.

*For saltwater fish*, Bream was the most common species group caught (an estimated 2.21 million), followed by the various Flathead species (2.10 million), Snapper (755,000) and the Whiting species group (734,000).

*Among freshwater fish*, European Carp (500,000) was the main species caught, followed by Australian Bass (196,000), Murray Cod (165,000) and Trout (Brown and Rainbow – a total of 158,000).

*Smaller crustacean species* dominated the remainder of the total catch (by numbers) – Saltwater Nippers (1.4 million), followed by Saltwater Prawns (729,000), and Freshwater Shrimp (410,000).

*Of the larger crustaceans*, Blue Swimmer Crab (74,000), Mud Crab (49,000), and Rock Lobster (27,000) were the most commonly caught species.

Species	No. caught	No. kept	Kept weight (t)	Released %
Bream 	2,205,700	614,400	330	72
Dusky Flathead 	1,058,600	481,200	288	55
Snapper 	755,400	185,600	148	75
Sand Whiting 	568,800	247,500	69	56
Tailor 	363,100	189,600	107	48
Mulloway 	111,600	21,400	103	81
Murray Cod 	165,600	20,800	–	87
Trout 	158,000	107,800	–	32
Australian Bass 	195,800	11,300	–	94

## Why do people go fishing?

The survey also assessed the reasons why people go fishing and in summary, the main reasons were: relaxing in the outdoors and fresh air; spending time with family and friends; and the enjoyment of catching fish.

## What's changed since the last survey?

This is the second state-wide survey of recreational fishing in NSW and the ACT. The first survey was conducted in 2000/01. Below are some comparative results from these surveys.

**Number of fishers:** The 2013/14 survey found that around 850,000 people in NSW and the ACT go recreational fishing. This is a lower figure compared with the 2000/01 survey (around 1 million fishers). Similar levels of decrease have occurred in other states and territories – mainly due to demographic factors, e.g. the 'ageing of the population', where the lowest participation rates occur in the oldest age group.

**Fishing effort:** An average of 4.3 days fished per fisher in 2013/14 compared with 5.6 days per fisher in 2000/01.

**Fishing method:** A significant increase occurred in the number of line fishing days in 2013/14 where lures/jigs/flyes were used (as opposed to bait), compared with 2000/01.



**Catch rates:** For several key species (e.g. Kingfish, Australian Salmon, Murray Cod and Mulloway), catch rates actually increased in 2013/14 compared with 2000/01. Others remained relatively stable (e.g. Bream, Snapper, and the various Flathead species) while some decreased (e.g. Tailor, Golden Perch, Leatherjackets, and the Whiting species group).

**Release rates:** For most species these were higher in 2013/14 compared with 2000/01. Reduced catch limits, angler preference and education programs are likely contributors to these higher rates.

**Satisfaction levels:** At the end of both surveys, fishers were asked how satisfied they were with the overall quality of their fishing during the previous 12 months. In 2013/14, 76% of fishers were at least quite satisfied – a substantial increase when compared with 61% in 2000/01.

