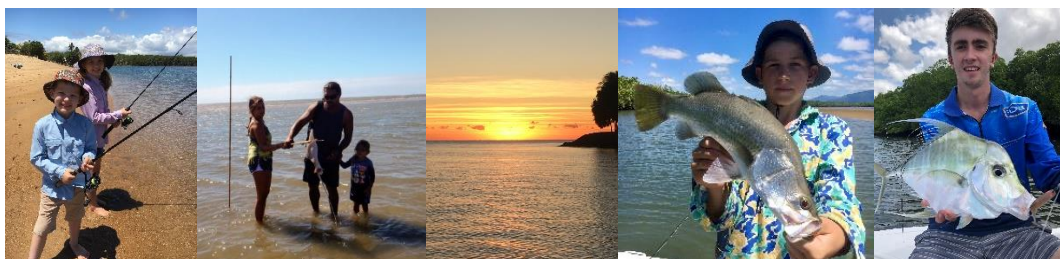


Fish for the Future

Douglas Shire recreational fishing voluntary code of practice

A Douglas Shire sustainability initiative



I fish for the future

Douglas Shire Recreational Fishing Code of Practice

Purpose

There are few places like the Douglas Shire for the diversity of fishing experiences a fisher can enjoy. The closeness of the Great Barrier Reef means a fisher can fish its blue waters in the morning for reef fish and gamefish, return inshore by lunchtime to catch a barramundi in the estuary and fish the rainforest for jungle perch before the sun sets.

The Douglas Shire council and the Douglas Shire Fish for the Future working group encourages you to pledge your support of the Voluntary Code of Practice as a demonstration of your commitment to the future resilience and sustainability of our fishery and the values it provides our community. The more people that make this pledge the better. This will allow us to demonstrate the community's stewardship of the fishery, and its supporting environment, and that we are committed to *Fish for the Future*.

In September 2021 the Douglas Shire council released an action plan "*Fish for the Future: Towards a community managed fishery*". The action plan was developed following thorough community consultation. It addresses the community's concerns about the sustainability of the regions fisheries and describes actions to support their vision for *an abundant and resilient local fishery cared for by the community*.

A key component of the action plan is this Voluntary Code of Practice which has been endorsed by the Douglas Shire council, the Douglas Shire fishing community, the Fish for the Future working group and all other relevant stakeholders. This code sets out sustainable fishing practices that the Douglas Shire community aspires to adopt. The community encourages local and visiting fishers to adopt these practices whilst fishing in the region's waters.

The code, which is presented in detail below, is voluntary.

Spear fishing and Game fishing:

This document is designed to present best practice principles that are relevant to all forms of recreational fishing. We note that there are specialised forms of recreational fishing, such as game fishing and spearfishing that have developed more detailed codes of practice that address the unique aspects of these activities. We recommend that Game fishers and Spear fishers adopting this code also review the Game fishing and Spear fishing codes of practice found here:

- [Game fishing Association of Australia: Code of Practice](#)
- [Australian Underwater Federation: Spear fishing Code of Conduct](#)

Acknowledgements:

The community would not have the opportunities the Fish for the Future action plan provides them without the support and financial investment of the Douglas Shire Council, Douglas Shire Local Marine Advisory Committee, Australian Government's Reef Trust and the Great Barrier Reef Foundation.

The Douglas Local Marine Advisory Committee (LMAC) has been instrumental in bringing a diverse group of stakeholders together and providing them with a voice to influence their fishing future. These stakeholders include Traditional owners, Fishing Tackle sales, Recreational fishers, Commercial fishers, Marine Park Management, Fisheries management, Charter fishing, Game fishing, regional tourism organisation, Chamber of commerce, Conservation and Environment. In addition to 3 community workshops held during the development of the Fish for the Future action plan 63 individuals representing the stakeholder groups above were engaged directly during the community consultation process.

Douglas Shire Recreational Fishing Code of Practice

The Fish

- I practice sustainable harvest behaviours. *“Limit your catch don’t catch your limit.”*
- I am committed to the respectful and ethical treatment of animals, including fish destined for release or consumption.
- I prioritise the proper care and handling of all fish being released. *“Gently Does It: Best practices for released fish survival.”*
 - **Be ready.** Choose your fishing gear to maximise post-release survival and fish welfare.
 - Barbless hooks
 - Knotless landing nets
 - Have a cool wet surface like a brag mat ready.



- **Be quick.** Once the fish is landed minimise the handling and the time exposed to air to increase the survival of the fish when released.
- **Be gentle.** When handling fish for release use wet hands, cradle the fish with two hands (no holding the fish vertically by the tail or jaw), avoid hot dry surfaces.



- For deeply hooked fish cut the line close to the fish’s mouth and leave the hook in place.
- **Revive.** Hold fish upright facing the current. Use a landing net where sharks or crocodiles are present. When the fish has revived, gently release it in an area away from predators.
- **Fishing in deep water.** *The term Barotrauma is used to describe the symptoms fish display when captured in deep water (hard stomach, popped eyes, distended/protruding gut). At depths over 20m the damage this does to a fish’s internal organs means there is a low chance of the fish surviving after release no matter how they are handled or treated. The use of venting tools or release weights may benefit larger fish, such as cod, survive release. **Catch and release fishing of bottom fish is not recommended in depths greater than 20m.***
 - **Finger Mark and Nanny Gai** are extremely vulnerable to the effects of Barotrauma with studies showing these fish have the lowest survival rate of any fish after release when caught from depths of greater than 8m – **If you are catching numerous undersized specimens of these species please think about moving to another spot.**



Douglas Shire Recreational Fishing Code of Practice

The Environment

- I am a dedicated and active participant in the care for the rivers, coastal catchments and the Great Barrier Reef.
- When anchoring near coral I choose to use the lightest gear possible to secure my vessel.
- I am committed to minimising my use of plastic. I return all rubbish with me to shore.
- I ensure my vehicle and vessel are maintained to limit my environmental footprint.

Compliance

- I have Zero tolerance for illegal fishing activities. I abide by all state and federal regulations and laws affecting how and where I fish and the number and size of the fish I harvest.
- I always report suspected illegal fishing activities by using the FishWatch hotline 1800 017 116

Science

- I support research and monitoring that benefits the marine environment and the fishery by willingly providing information and data to researchers.

Conduct

- I maintain exemplary standards of stewardship for the fishery and the environment.
- I respect that other people's enjoyment of the area I fish is no less valuable than mine.
- I seek opportunities to share my knowledge of the Douglas Shire Recreational Fishing Code of Practice with others.
- I hold others accountable to these standards and the practices described in this code.

Acknowledgement of the Traditional Owners

- I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and water on which I fish. I acknowledge and pay respect to the elders past and present, and to emerging leaders.

*Pledge your support for the Douglas Shire Recreational Fishing Code of Practice

Yes! I pledge to support the behaviours and practices described in the Douglas Shire Recreational Fishing Code of Practice.

Name:

Pledging as an individual or family:

- **Individual**
- **Family and number of family members**

Post code:

Email (optional):

Privacy Statement: The Douglas Shire Council is collecting the personal information you supply on this form for the purpose being able to validate each response adopting the Recreational Fishing Voluntary Code of Practice as unique. In addition, Council will utilise your contact details to provide information and updates on the Douglas Shire Fish for the Future action plan and fishing related issues and initiatives supporting the plan. Your personal details will not be disclosed to any other person or agency external to Council without your consent unless required or authorised by law.



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