



VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES
 Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW
 Coastal Professional Wild-Catch Fisheries
Central Coast - Hawkesbury area



The Central Coast-Hawkesbury is a diverse fishing area which includes estuarine meshing and trapping in the Tuggerah Lakes and Hawkesbury River, as well as offshore trap and line fisheries. It also contains one of only three estuary prawn trawl fisheries in the state. The Hawkesbury, Hunter and Clarence Rivers are the only rivers suitable for supporting this form of fishing operation. The size and quality of the Hawkesbury School Prawn make them a highly valued species. The Valuing Coastal Fisheries project investigated the role of professional fishing in the Central Coast-Hawkesbury communities according to seven dimensions of community wellbeing.

Dimensions of wellbeing
 Seven 'dimensions of wellbeing' were identified through the Valuing Coastal Fisheries project as being relevant to the professional wild-catch industry. These are all elements of overall community wellbeing that the industry contributes to in a number of ways. The project explored the nature of these contributions through interviews, an economic questionnaire of fishers and three social questionnaires. These included a random phone survey of the general public (35% of whom identified as recreational fishers), a phone survey of fish retailers and wholesalers (including co-ops) and an internet questionnaire of tourism and hospitality businesses.

A resilient local economy
 The wild-catch industry in the Sydney and Central Coast region generates more than \$82.62 million in revenue and over 489 full-time local jobs. This includes \$41.5m, and 208 jobs, from the industry and the businesses that service it and a similar amount from the secondary processing, wholesale and retail sector.

Eating out is the most popular activity undertaken by domestic visitors to the Central Coast region and the fishing industry provides an important and valued product to local tourism and hospitality markets. Our project indicated that the vast majority (89%) of NSW residents expect to eat locally caught seafood when on holidays.

Residents of the Central Coast recognise the economic importance of the wild-catch industry to their region – 92% think it provides important employment opportunities, 88% believe it is an important industry for NSW. 86% of people believe that professional fishing plays an important part in tourism in their region through, for example, the supply of local seafood.

Community health and safety
 Consumers on the Central Coast have a strong preference for local or Australian product. 93% of residents indicated they would prefer to purchase local seafood because of the benefits it provides the local community, 84% prefer it even if it is more expensive and 68% believe local seafood is better for their health. 47% of residents said they 'always' (11%) or 'often' (36%) purchase locally caught seafood.

The fishers we interviewed indicated they regularly participated in search and rescue operations, including towing broken down vessels.



Education and knowledge generation
 Staff from the Hornsby Shire Council work closely with local fishers on a range of projects aimed at improving water quality and resource use in the Hawkesbury River. Council officers value the opportunity to learn and benefit from the knowledge of the fishers in the area and in turn they work together on environmental and management issues of concern, especially in relation to water quality.



Those anecdotal observations are so important that we've actually got a database. Not just for the professional fishers, but for others. They'll make notes on red spot disease. Or they'll make a comment about 'I've never seen it so cloudy'... We just capture all of that because that's all part of that learned experience of being a professional fisher.

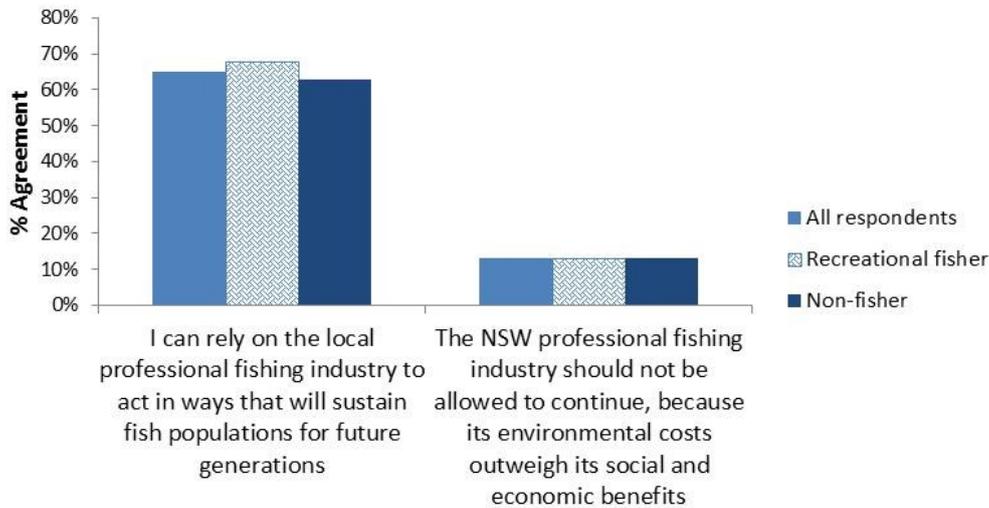
**Council Natural Resources Manager
 - Central Coast**

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A healthy environment

The wild-catch professional fishing industry in the Central Coast area operates under a range of regulatory and voluntary controls aimed at minimising its environmental impact. The majority of the Central Coast community support the continuation of their local industry and believe the industry can be relied on to act in a sustainable manner. Despite this there are regular calls for further closures to professional fishing in the area from some sections of the community.

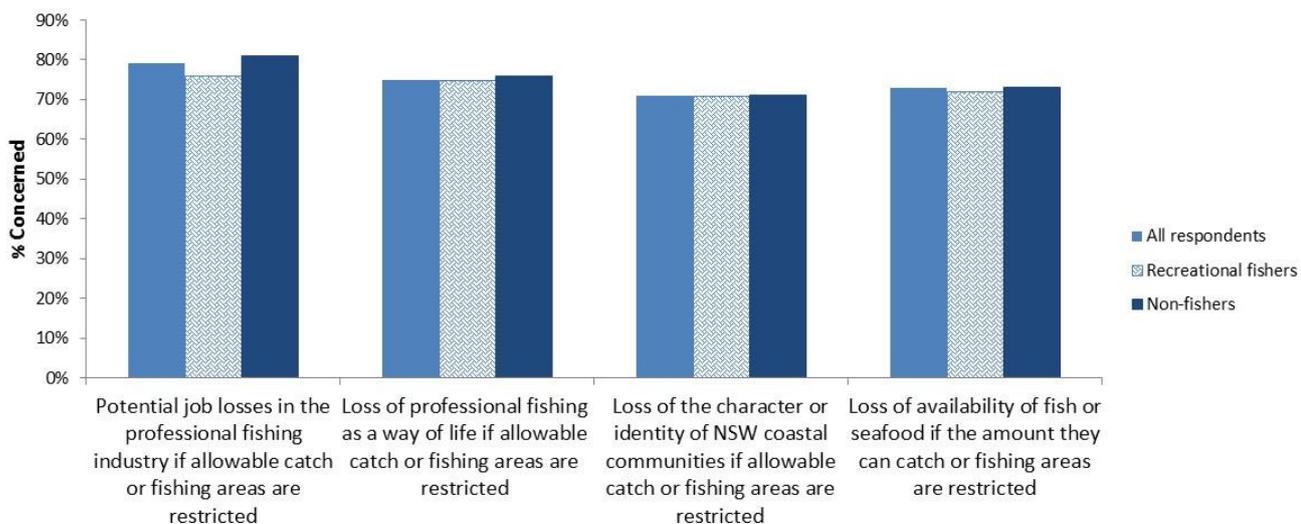


Integrated, culturally diverse & vibrant communities

The fishing industry plays an active role in local communities, especially the small fishing villages of Patonga, Brooklyn and Wisemans Ferry. This includes sponsorship and donations – especially ice – to local sporting and community groups. Seafood forms an important component of cultural celebrations and recreation in the Central Coast, especially over the summer period – 74% of residents purchased seafood the preceding Christmas, and 69% during the summer holiday period (excluding Christmas/New Year). Other celebrations and cultural events also involved seafood consumption including Easter (70%) and New Years Eve (48%). Given their proximity to Sydney, the local fishing on the Central Coast is an important supplier of live product to Chinese restaurants and other Asian buyers, e.g. for Lunar New Year celebrations.

Cultural heritage and community identity

The fishing industry is an important part of the history of the Central Coast, especially the smaller fishing villages on the Hawkesbury River. Residents of the area expressed high levels of concern over the loss of community identity (71% concerned) and the loss of a 'way of life' for fishers (75% concerned) if fishing were to be further restricted.



Leisure and recreation

The Hawkesbury River is renowned by recreational fishers for its bait – the Hawkesbury River prawn and Hawkesbury River squid are sought after bait species marketed throughout bait and tackle shops in Sydney and the Central Coast. Over a third (35%) of residents surveyed in the Central Coast area were recreational fishers. They indicated a strong preference for locally sourced bait (67%). The reason for these preferences included a belief that it was better for the community (84%), 71% thought it was better for the local environment and 50% believed it was more effective in catching fish.