



VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES
 Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW
 Coastal Professional Wild-Catch Fisheries
Clarence



The Clarence, although only a small geographic region, is the most productive fishing region within NSW. The river supports an estuary general and estuary prawn trawl industry, based mainly out of Maclean, while the townships of Iluka and Yamba are the home ports of the state's largest fleet of prawn trawlers. The Valuing Coastal Fisheries project investigated the role of professional fishing in Clarence communities according to seven dimensions of community wellbeing.

<p>Dimensions of wellbeing</p>	<p>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.</p>	
<p>A resilient local economy</p>	<p>The wild-catch industry in the Clarence generates more than \$60 million in revenue and over 650 full time local jobs. This includes \$26m, and 237 jobs, from the industry and the businesses that service it and approximately \$34m and 415 jobs from the secondary processing, wholesale and retail sector.</p> <p>Eating out is the most popular activity undertaken by domestic visitors to the Clarence area 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.</p> <p>Residents of the Clarence Valley recognise the economic importance of the wild-catch industry to their region – 95% think it provides important employment opportunities, 94% believe it is an important industry for NSW. 92% of people believe that professional fishing plays an important part in tourism in their region through, for example, the supply of local seafood.</p>	
<p>Community health and safety</p>	<p>Consumers in the Clarence have the strongest preference for local or regional product in the state (56% preferred seafood from their own town or region and 36% preferred Australian product). Consumers from this area also eat more seafood and are the most likely in the state to always (26%) or often (50%) purchase local product. Most (60%) purchase seafood once a fortnight or more, with a preference for fish followed by prawns. 83% of people from this region prefer local product as they believe it is better for their health.</p> <p>The fishers we interviewed indicated they regularly participated in search and rescue operations, including towing broken down vessels and assisting with flood response such as cleaning up debris and delivering supplies to stranded residents.</p>	

Education and knowledge generation

The fishing knowledge held by fishers in the Clarence have lead to significant improvements in efforts to improve productivity and reduce bycatch. Some of the earliest bycatch reduction devices for the estuary and ocean prawn trawl fisheries in NSW were developed in conjunction with Clarence fishers.

“Our family has pioneered all the way through. From that you learn, learn, learn and learn. So I cut a hole in the net, put a bit of twine to hold it together and shot away. When I picked the trawl up, two came in full of fish rubbish and prawns... but the one I cut a hole in was just about pure prawns. So over a couple more nights I started doing a little of my own research on it... I had contacts in fisheries... They decided yep, this is worthwhile following up on... That's now mandatory in all ocean going boats, it's what we call a BRD, which is a by-catch reduction device.”

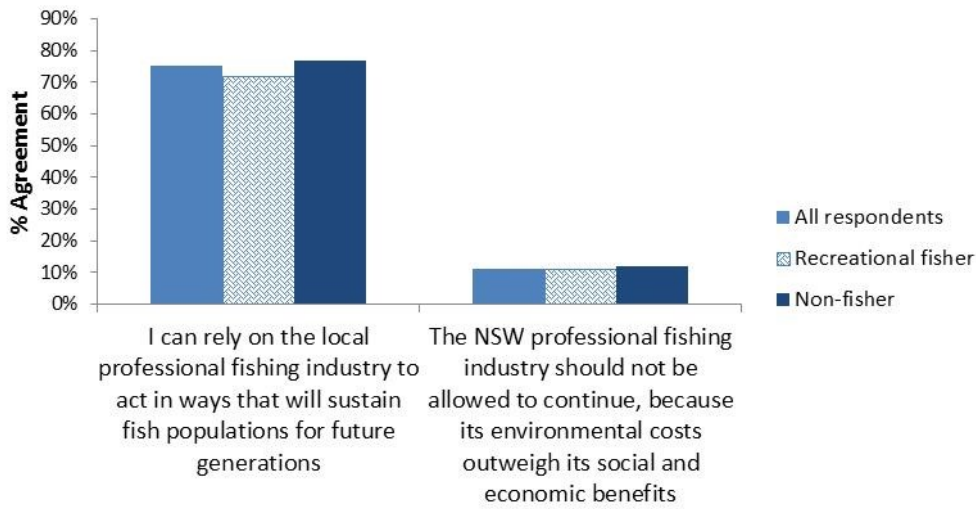
Former professional fisher - Clarence

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A healthy environment

The wild-catch professional fishing industry in the Clarence operates under a range of regulatory and voluntary controls aimed at minimising its environmental impact. The majority of the Clarence community support the continuation of their local industry and believe the industry can be relied on to act in a sustainable manner.



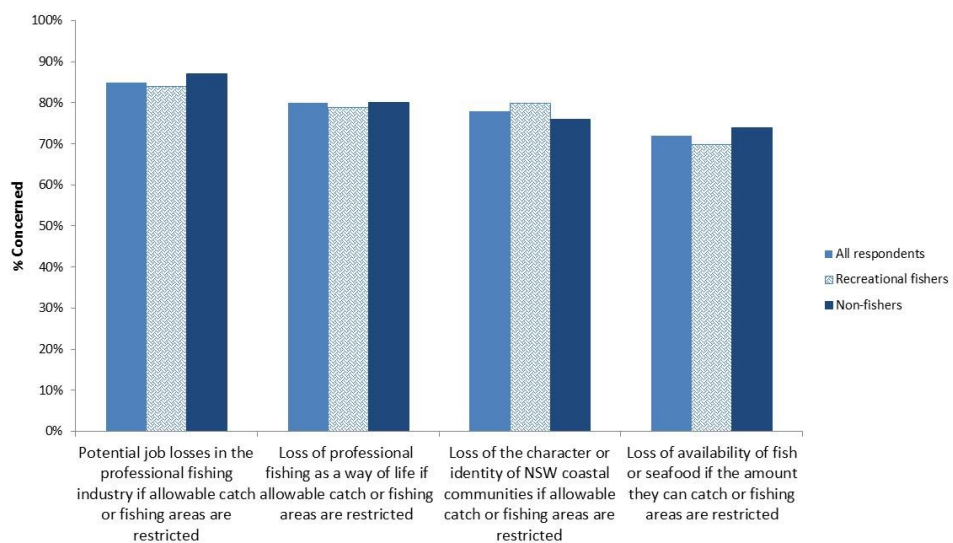
Integrated, culturally diverse and vibrant communities

The fishing industry plays an active role in the Clarence region. The Clarence co-op and other fish merchant businesses provide sponsorship and donations – especially ice – to local sporting and community groups. The co-op also provides important support services for fishers and their families, as well as conducting regular school tours and open days. Seafood forms an important component of cultural celebrations in the Clarence, especially over the summer period – 76% of residents purchased seafood the preceding Christmas, and 69% during the summer holiday period (excluding Christmas/New Year). 74% purchased seafood during Easter.



Cultural heritage and community identity

The fishing industry is an important part of the history of the Clarence and was fundamental to the development of Maclean, Iluka and Yamba. Residents of the area expressed high levels of concern over the loss of community identity (78% concerned) and the loss of a 'way of life' for fishers (80% concerned) if fishing were to be further restricted.



Leisure and recreation

Close to half the residents surveyed in the Clarence were recreational fishers (48%) – the highest levels in the state. They indicated a strong preference for locally sourced bait – 80% preferred local bait even if it was more expensive. The reason for these preferences included a belief that it was better for the community (95%), 88% thought it was better for the local environment and 70% believed it was more effective in catching fish.