



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



The main fishing ports in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven area include Wollongong, Lake Illawarra, Kiama, the Shoalhaven (Nowra/Jervis Bay/Greenwall Point) and Ulladulla. The area supports a diverse range of fisheries targeting a variety of species including ocean trap and line, lobster, ocean haul, a seasonal longline tuna fishery and an active estuary general fishery. The Valuing Coastal Fisheries project investigated the role of professional fishing in Illawarra-Shoalhaven 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 Illawarra-Shoalhaven generates more than \$30 million in revenue and over 284 full-time local jobs. This includes \$15m, and 121 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 one of the most popular activities undertaken by domestic visitors to the Shoalhaven and Illawarra 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 Shoalhaven and Illawarra recognise the economic importance of the wild-catch industry to their region – 94% think it provides important employment opportunities, 95% 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 Residents in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven prefer Australian sourced seafood (52%) with 30% preferring seafood sourced from their own town or region. Consumption patterns also indicate an interest in locally sourced product with many consumers 'always' (15%) or often (41%) purchasing local seafood. Most (62%) purchase seafood once a fortnight or more, with a preference for fish followed by prawns. 76% of people from this region prefer local product as they believe it is better for their health. The fishers we interviewed indicated they regularly participated in search and rescue operations, including towing broken-down vessels.



Education and knowledge generation The environmental knowledge held by local professional fishers is a valuable resource for managers and communities. For example, in the Illawarra fishers have historically worked with conservation groups and statutory authorities to monitor concerns about water quality, particularly within highly industrialised catchments around Wollongong.



I did a report [on] the composition of fallout that was going into the waters...it was something like three tonnes of arsenic had actually fallen into the water over [30 years]..and it ended up destroying many parts of the lake... So to cut a long story short, it was environmental awareness and environmental activism back in the mid '80s by the fishing industry and other concerned people... working together that caused the government to create the then Lake Illawarra Authority.

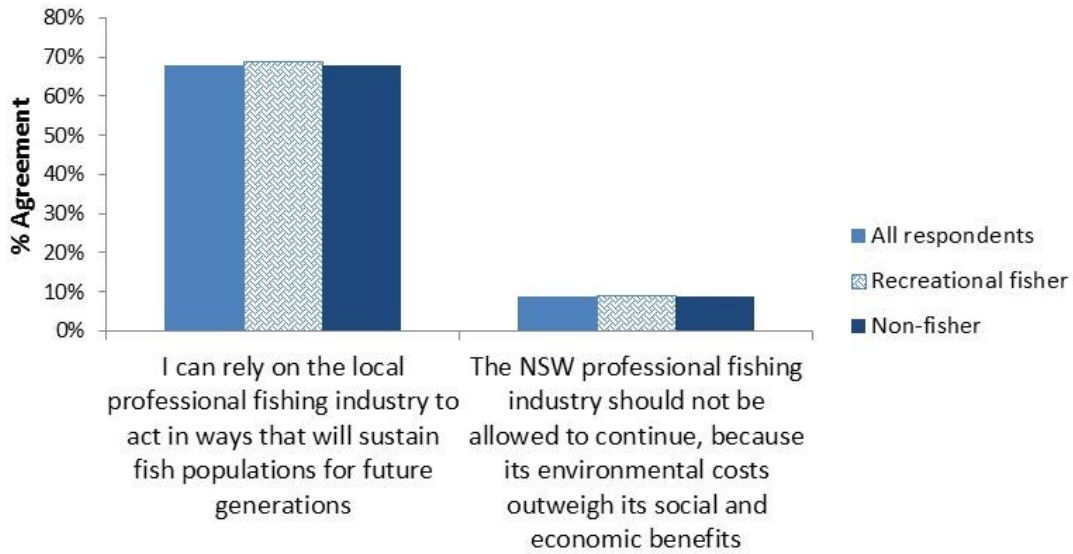
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Social and Economic Evaluation of NSW Coastal Professional Wild-Catch Fisheries

A healthy environment

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



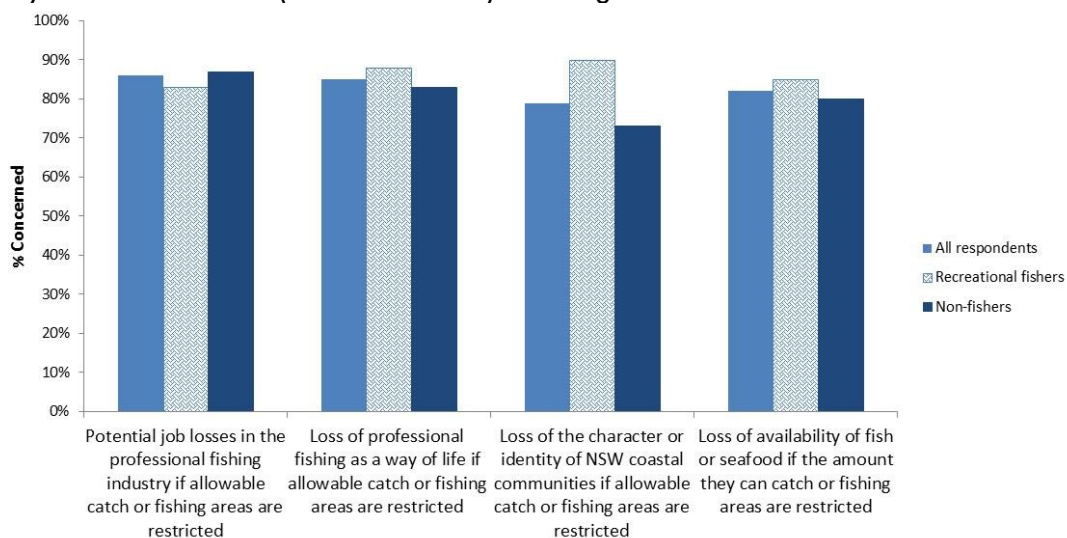
Integrated, culturally diverse and vibrant communities

The fishing industry plays an active role in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven. The Ulladulla co-op and other fish merchant businesses in the area 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. The annual Ulladulla ‘Blessing of the Fleet’ is major cultural event and celebration.

Seafood forms an important component of cultural celebrations and recreation in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven, especially over the summer period – 79% of residents purchased seafood the preceding Christmas, and 66% during the summer holiday period (excluding Christmas/New Year). Other celebrations and cultural events also involved seafood consumption including Easter (68%) and New Years Eve (51%).

Cultural heritage and community identity

The fishing industry is an important part of the history of the region and the port areas of Ulladulla, Greenwall Point and Wollongong have strong ties to the industry as working harbours from which fishing operations were conducted. The strong Italian heritage of the fishing industry in towns like Ulladulla has had an important influence on the character and identity of the region. Residents expressed high levels of concern over the loss of community identity (79% concerned) and the loss of a ‘way of life’ for fishers (85% concerned) if fishing were to be further restricted.



Leisure and recreation

Over a third (36%) of residents surveyed in the Illawarra-Shoalhaven were recreational fishers. They indicated a strong preference for locally sourced bait – 84% preferred local bait even if it was more expensive. The reason for these preferences included a belief that it was better for the community (93%), 80% thought it was better for the local environment and 62% believed it was more effective in catching fish.