



VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES

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



Sydney is the birthplace of the professional fishing industry in Australia, with fish being harvested for sale in the colony not long after the settlement was established. Today a small but diverse industry continues to operate within the metropolitan area, particularly in offshore trap and line and trawl fisheries. Much of Sydney Harbour is closed to professional fishing due to heavy metals in the waterways. The Valuing Coastal Fisheries project investigated the role of professional fishing in the Sydney community 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.

Sydney Fish Market (SFM) is a major tourist attraction within the Sydney area. In 2015 more than 3 million people visited SFM. This included more than 690,000 international tourists - equivalent to more than a fifth (22%) of international visitors to the Sydney region.

Residents of Sydney recognise the economic importance of the wild-catch industry to their region – 89% think it provides important employment opportunities, 86% believe it is an important industry for NSW. 80% 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 in Sydney are significantly more likely to prefer Australian product (66%) than anywhere else in the state and have some of the highest seafood consumption rates in tNSW. Most (67%) purchase seafood once a fortnight or more. 70% of people from this region believe that local product is better for their health.

Education and knowledge generation OceanWatch is a Sydney based environmental group which works to improve the sustainability of the seafood industry. It works closely with the NSW wild-catch industry – assisting it to address concerns about habitat damage and water quality, as well as providing opportunities for fishers to improve their knowledge about sustainable fishing practices. These skills are then recognised and promoted through the "Master Fisherman" program.



Each of the individual fishers get their own Quick Response code, and the information that's accessible under that Quick Response code includes... profile videos of the individual fishermen themselves... videos of the methods used within the fishery, and... a whole raft of other information... So, things like stock assessments, the DPI species profiles.... links to things like the Environmental Impact Assessments... where the fishermen are actually fishing, and then we're linking as well to recipes and other things.

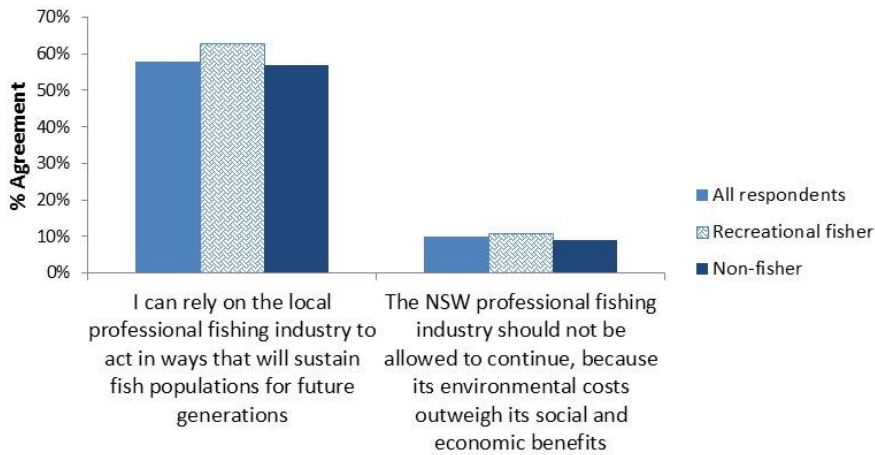
OceanWatch Chair

VALUING COASTAL FISHERIES

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

A healthy environment

The wild-catch professional fishing industry in the Sydney area operates under a range of regulatory and voluntary controls aimed at minimising its environmental impact. The Sydney community holds the highest level of concern over the sustainability of the industry in the state, with only 58% of residents believing that the industry can be trusted to act in sustainable ways. Despite these concerns only 10% believe the industry should not be allowed to continue.



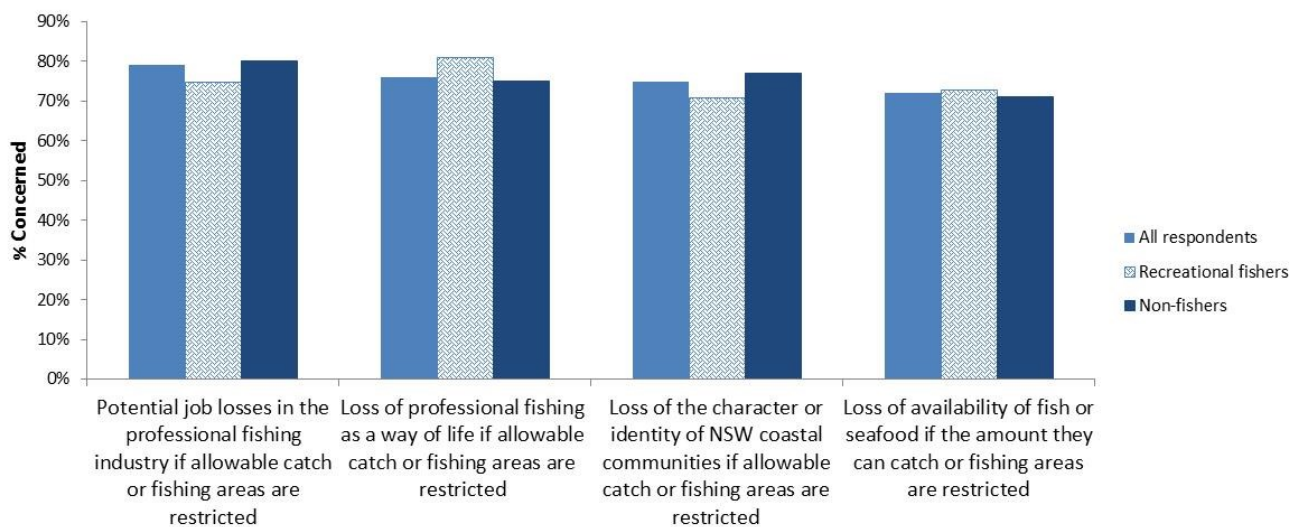
Integrated, culturally diverse and vibrant communities

Seafood is a culturally significant food for many within the Sydney area. It forms an integral part of celebrations and recreation, especially over the summer period – 75% of residents purchased seafood the preceding Christmas, and 71% during the summer holiday period (excluding Christmas/New Year). For people from Asian backgrounds seafood is especially sought after for celebrations such as Lunar New Year. The annual ‘Blessing of the Fleet’ event at SFM is an important cultural event for Italian families involved in the fishing industry, and for the wider Sydney community. SFM and other fish merchant businesses in the Sydney area are actively involved in community life, providing sponsorships and donations to a range of charities and community groups. SFM also provides important support services for fishers and their families.



Cultural heritage and community identity

The history of the NSW professional fishing industry is a significant component of the history of Sydney, from the birth of the colony. It was particularly important in the earliest days of colonisation when it helped to keep the struggling settlement alive. Today, residents expressed high levels of concern over the loss of community identity (75% concerned) and the loss of a ‘way of life’ for fishers (76% concerned) if fishing were to be further restricted in NSW.



Leisure and recreation

A quarter (25%) of residents surveyed in the Sydney area were recreational fishers, the lowest representation of recreational fishers in the state. They indicated a strong preference for locally sourced bait – 79% preferred local bait even if it was more expensive. The reason for these preferences included a belief that it was better for the community (87%), 68% thought it was better for the local environment and 62% believed it was more effective in catching fish.