

Valuing Victoria's professional fishing and aquaculture industries

The near west produces premium seafood products such as rock lobster, wild-caught abalone, King George whiting, and Southern Calamari from Port Phillip Bay. However, there is a need to develop opportunities to increase the supply of finfish in this region.



Near west fisheries make **significant economic contributions**

\$22m
the added value
professional fisheries
contributed to the near west
region in 2016/17

198
the number of
full-time jobs
professional fishing
provided in the near west
region in 2016/17



Victorians prefer
local seafood

90%
say it's important to
produce seafood
in Victoria and **reduce**
reliance on
imports*



Consuming seafood is part of
travelling the
Victorian coast

81%
of Victorians say
eating **local seafood**
is an important part of their
coastal holiday
experience

88%
of tourism operators say
the fishing industry adds to the
local character
of towns



The fishing industry voluntarily
collaborates in research
and projects to **improve**
environmental health

82%
of assessed Victorian
fish stocks are classified as
'sustainable' or
'recovering'



Fishing contributes to the
sense of identity
in near west coastal communities

83%
of residents agree fishing is
important to their
cultural heritage
and **community**
identity

Valuing Victoria's professional fishing: measuring economic and social contributions in Near West Victoria

The near west region includes the Great Ocean Rd, the Surf Coast and the Bellarine Peninsula. Port Campbell and Apollo Bay are home to Southern Rock Lobster fisheries. There are also coastal fisheries for abalone and live Wrasse, and inland there is eel. The Bellarine Peninsula has a small processing and sales sector for finfish that was founded on the Port Phillip Bay net fishery. There was a substantial contraction in 2016 when this sustainable, small-scale net fishery was shut to make way for recreational fishing. Apart from six remaining Port Phillip Bay fishers, there are only a handful of commercial fishers with home ports on the Bellarine, targeting rock lobster, live Wrasse, abalone and trawl species. While Apollo Bay is thriving, and has a very active Fishermen's Co-op, the industry along the near west coast has contracted and there's an acknowledged lack of supply of finfish. The region accounted for 8% of the 15,032 tonnes of seafood professionally caught in Victoria in 2016/17.

Valuing Victoria's wild-catch fisheries and aquaculture industries

This research project, conducted by the University of Technology Sydney (UTS), for the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, investigated how the fishing and aquaculture industry contributes to the wellbeing of regional communities and to Victoria overall. The study found the industry in the near west contributes in five main ways:

- economic diversity and resilience
- food supply
- tourism and recreation
- environmental health
- social fabric

Economic diversity and resilience – Near west fisheries generate significant economic contributions

- Professional fisheries contributed \$22 million of added value to the near west in the 2016/17 financial year.
- Professional fisheries contributed 198 full-time jobs in the region in that period.
- Near west fisheries provide important flow-on activity and jobs, locally and in Melbourne.
- It contributes jobs where there are few alternatives, though this benefit is not as great as in previous years. It is particularly the case in Apollo Bay, population 1500, where farming and timber has declined.
- The fishing industry is active through the year, versus the seasonal and intermittent nature of tourism.

Food supply – local seafood is in demand

- The region has premium seafood such as lobster, abalone, King George whiting and Southern Calamari.
- 90% of Victorians surveyed believe it's important to produce local seafood and reduce reliance on imports.
- 64% of suppliers surveyed say they lost customers in the wake of local fisheries closures.
- 62% of the hospitality sector surveyed says demand for local seafood is growing.

Tourism and recreation – The seafood industry is part of the coastal travel experience

- 88% of Victorians expect to eat local seafood when visiting the coast.
- International visitors are the group most interested in eating local seafood and there are growing tourism opportunities
- 69% of Victorians holidaymakers surveyed enjoy watching commercial fishers at work.
- The Apollo Bay Seafood Festival, with 8000 visitors, has generated economic and social benefits.
- Professional and recreational fishing are often portrayed as being at odds but the study found evidence of positive interactions, such as sharing advice, facilities and safety at sea.

Environmental health – The industry helps manage fish stocks and the marine environment

- Data collected by the industry helps manage commercial and recreational fisheries sustainably.
- 82% of Victorian fish stocks assessed are classified as 'sustainable' or 'recovering'.
- The near west industry undertakes voluntary practices to improve stocks and the marine environment – for instance, tagging thousands of lobsters for research.

Social fabric – Fishing contributes to the sense of identity in near west coastal communities

- 83% of residents surveyed in fishing towns agree fishing is important to heritage and identity.
- Near west fishing businesses support and donate to local events and charities.

For more information, see: uts.ac/VictoriaFisheriesAquaculture

Victoria's fisheries and aquaculture: economic and social contributions FRDC Project No 2017-092

Source: Valuing Victoria's Wild-Catch and Aquaculture Industries, UTS

*Percentages are from survey responses

