

Media Release: Recreational fishing under threat as Government boost foreign exports

Queensland's United Recreational Fishers (URF) is rallying in response to a recent government statement that "the sky is the limit" regarding commercial fishing exports. This proclamation has ignited anger among recreational fishers, who view it as another example of governmental deception and hypocrisy.

A URF's President Jeff Knuth stated, "Queensland recreational fishers are feeling angry and betrayed that our government is continuing to put restrictive bag limits on our community, while simultaneously declaring fish stocks healthy enough to support unprecedented commercial harvesting for foreign markets."

The group's reaction stems from a statement by Pauline Jacob, Deputy Director-General for Fisheries and Forestry, who endorsed large-scale commercial fishing of reef species for export, using the phrase "the sky is the limit" to describe the potential for success.

"The Queensland Government has confirmed that stock levels of fish are sustainable enough to export 766 tonnes of coral trout in 2022-23, yet our recreational fishers are continuing to be restricted by bag limits," URF President Jeff Knuth said. "It's reminiscent of 2002 when a third of the Great Barrier Reef was closed due to unsubstantiated claims of recreational fishing impact. We saw through the lie then, and we see through it now."

"Their statement goes on to say the export market approval is 'good news' for the \$34 million Commercial fishery economy, but what about the \$2.5 billion recreational fishing industry in Queensland? What about prioritising local Queensland and Australian consumers first, over foreign markets?," Mr Knuth notes.

The URF accuses the government and its advisory boards of using questionable science to justify a biased agenda. "How can we trust governments that impose stricter limits on recreational fishers citing scientific reasons, while simultaneously declaring fish stocks healthy enough to support unprecedented commercial harvesting for foreign markets?" the spokesperson questioned.

URF is mobilising Queensland's million-plus recreational fishing community to form a powerful lobby group. They aim to leverage their significant economic impact and voting power to influence political decisions by establishing a member-based organisation to raise awareness of the contradictory government regulations.

"Recreational fishing supports a multi-billion dollar industry in Queensland, benefiting motels, hotels, caravan parks, boat and trailer manufacturers, tackle shops, marine services, and many more sectors," the spokesperson emphasised. "We are prepared to use our collective voice and economic influence to ensure politicians listen or face consequences at the ballot box."

"I would encourage anyone who wants to find out more about our core values and the upcoming rally to visit our Facebook page and get in touch with URF, we need to take action now to prevent further restrictions on our fishing communities to make sure our kids get to enjoy this way of life in the future. As for how far we're willing to take this fight for fair treatment? Well, 'the sky is the limit'."

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