



Marine Park Policy,
Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority,
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Joint Submission

The [Australian Fishing Trade Association](#) (AFTA), the [Game Fishing Association of Australia](#) (GFAA) and [Boating Industry Association](#) Ltd (BIA) appreciate the opportunity to make this joint submission on the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (GBRMP) “*Fish Aggregating Devices and Artificial Reefs*” Draft Policy.

AFTA is the national peak body representing the whole of the recreational fishing industry throughout Australia. Our membership represents manufacturers, wholesale distributors, retail, media, charter operations and as such we are in connection with every person participating in recreational fishing.

The GFAA is the world’s oldest national association representing gamefishers, with a membership in excess of 9,000 representing every State and Territory. A vast number of our members access the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) on a regular basis and for many more it is without doubt an iconic and aspirational destination.

The BIA is the peak industry body in Australia that represents the interests of boating which includes designers, manufacturers, importers, brokers, insurers, retailers, charters, yacht and boat clubs, marinas, events, surveyors, and trades from boat builders to riggers, and more. The BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating.

Together we recognise that currently there are no Fish Attracting Devices (FAD’s) or purposed Artificial Reefs (AR) within the GBRMP, there are of course reefs, artificial in nature, that have come to being through the tragic loss of vessels and aircraft throughout time.

We recognise the importance of the GBR, the need for sustainability and acknowledge that sustainability comes through protection of both the reef itself and the fish stocks.

We, as a collective support and promote ethical and sustainable, conservation-based fishing practices and we are very aware of the challenges faced within the GBRMP. On that basis, we will always support measures and initiatives intended to enhance the experience of all people fishing within the Marine Park.

This submission will not delve into the exact scientific arguments both for and against the introduction of FAD’s and AR’s as others more scientifically & eminently qualified will do so, however we do seek

to represent the common-sense approach based on the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental aspects to the potential introduction of FAD's & AR's.

[The National Social and Economic Survey of Recreational Fishers 2018-2021 FRDC Project No 2018-161, February 2023 \(the Survey\)](#) clearly identifies the triple bottom line contribution of the recreational fishing sector.

The Survey outlines that the Qld recreational fishing industry contributes \$2.5b to the national GDP, employs 23,602 Queenslanders through 26% of the population (1,015,700) participating in recreational fishing on 6,079,916 fishing days.

Supporting data from the BIA shows the boating economy itself generates significant benefits through employment. Last year (2021) the industry reported national turnover of \$9.55 billion, directly employed more than 26,000 people with more than 8000 contractors. Seventy-five per cent are in small family businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

With more than 85 per cent of the population living within 50km of the coast, it is little wonder that almost 1 in 5 households can have a boat or watercraft. People of all ages, gender and ability can participate in boating across paddle, sail and power for leisure and sport.

The Survey identifies that recreational fishers clearly demonstrate the type of environmental stewardship that benefits the GBR.

As for the social aspect of the triple bottom line, the Survey, in its Executive Summary states *“Recreational fishers have, on average higher levels of wellbeing than non-fishers, and those that fish more often have higher wellbeing”*

Fish Attracting Devices,

Since inception AFTA, GFAA & BIA have strongly supported the introduction of FAD's around Australia as a means of safe access through reduced distance and sustainability of fish stocks through relocating fishing effort away from natural structure.

We support the carefully planned and managed implementation of FAD's in the GBRMP as we have in the Wide Bay Burnett area adjoining the GBRMP in Queensland.

The role out of FAD's around Australia and in particular along the [east coast of Queensland](#) has been an outstanding and well measured success, beneficial to both recreational fishers, boating safety, fish stocks and the marine environment.

We acknowledge that of the 48 FAD's in Queensland, it is the 7 FAD's located in the Wide Bay Burnett region and in particular FAD's *“B1a”, “B1b”, “B1c” & “B1d”* 10 nautical miles off Burnett Heads, Bundaberg that have any reel proximity to the GBRMP.

In general, recreational fishers have benefited from FAD's providing accessible targeted locations with reasonable expectation of catching fish. Boating safety has benefited from the locations of FAD's improving boating safety by accessibility and proximity to land. This has also led to reduced fuel consumption and as such reducing the environmental impacts affecting climate change.

Fish stocks have benefited from a new aggregation area for pelagic species, new food chain and a reduction in incidental by catch of non-targeted species.

The natural marine environment has benefited from concentrating fishing effort to FAD's for pelagic species and as such reducing fishing effort, visitation and impact on the reef structures of the GBR.

Artificial Reefs:

AFTA, GFAA & BIA support any measures that increase fish stocks and sustainability whether FAD's or planned Artificial Reefs, however we have reservations on any proposed locations of AR's within the GBT near natural reef structures.

The current [QLD Government AR's](#) have clearly demonstrated benefit to recreational fishers & divers through establishing a new independent marine biosphere.

The Great Sandy Marine Park has 2 artificial reef areas accessible for recreational fishing, [Simpson Artificial Reef and Hardie Artificial Reef](#) . The purposed wreck reefs, HMAS Tobruk (Great Sandy Marine Park) and the HMAS Brisbane (Mooloolaba) are restricted access for Divers only but provide great benefit and access to the boating/diving community.

The [Morton Bay system of Artificial Reefs](#), whilst in no relative proximity to the GBR clearly demonstrate the broad triple bottom line benefits of a properly prepared and programmed arrangement of AR's.

Artificial Reefs create a completely new biosphere, particularly when located in "barren" zones away from natural reef structures. Given the sheer size and area of the reef identifying areas with no reef structure, readily accessible to recreational fishing boaters is not beyond the level of reality. Location and proximity to existing reef structures would be paramount in any decision.

The greatest benefit of FAD's and AR's is the reduced contact and in particular anchoring on natural reefs. Anchoring in reef areas, particularly anchoring on top of corals destroys not only the coral structures but can impact upon the habitat for the demersal fish attached to that reef area.

The inclusion of a dedicated program of deploying FADs and Artificial Reefs can be of great benefit to the fishing experience of visitors to the region plus have the potential to increase fish stocks and preserve coral structures.

We collectively support the installation of FADs and or Artificial Reefs where appropriate to support the social and economic benefits arising from boat-based fishing, and that includes within the GBRMP.

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