

19 February 2026



Boating Industry Association

The Hon. Gavin Pearce MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water; Minister for Fisheries
Parliament House,
Hobart TAS 7000
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Re: Sustainable Future for the Tasmanian Boating and Fishing Sector

1. Purpose

The Boating Industry Association (BIA) is the peak body for the boating industry across the nation and is advocating in support of boat-based fishing to the Tasmanian Government regarding the planned closure of the sand flathead recreational fishing zone in south-eastern Tasmania from 1 March 2026. Our objective is to ensure that management decisions support both the long-term health of fish stocks and the continued viability of the recreational boating economy.

2. The Critical Link: Boating & Fishing

Recreational boating and fishing are culturally and economically "hand-in-hand" in Australia. National data underscores the impact that fishing restrictions have on the boating sector:

- **Primary Motivation:** Half (49%) of all boaters identify fishing as the primary purpose of their typical boating trip..
- **Participation:** 5 million people go boating each year and most are every-day Australians in craft under 6m. While three-quarters of Australia's 4.2 million recreational fishers are also recreational boaters.
- **Vessel Type:** In the Southeast of Tasmania, where the closure is proposed, 74% of registered vessels are open powerboats which also represent the typical family runabout.

3. Socio-Economic Considerations

The BIA encourages a management approach that considers the broader "Blue Economy" supported by the boating industry:

- **Economic Contribution:** The national boating industry generates more than \$10 billion in annual turnover and supports 35,000 jobs, many in regional small businesses.

- Boater Investment: The average individual boater spends approximately \$14,535 per year injecting billions into the economy.
- Wellbeing: Over 90% of boaters believe the activity has a significant positive influence on mental and physical wellbeing. Accessible local fishing is a key driver of this social benefit.
- Boating is a way of life for many people in Tasmania and boat-based fishing remains a foundational part of the Tasmanian recreational fishing culture involving tens of thousands of families.

The BIA stands with our industry partners, including the Australian Fishing Trade Association (AFTA) and TARFish, in advocating for a balanced approach. We recommend the following:

- pause the closure
- give the current sand Flathead settings a chance
- review the situation in 12 months
- ensure the data being applied is robust and can withstand independent peer review
- conduct an impact assessment to better understand the social and economic implications
- develop – with key stakeholders - a consultation and engagement plan
- explore alternatives – with key stakeholders - such as sustained and funded education aimed at behaviour change
- increase education, compliance and enforcement of existing rules.

If the TAS Government proceeds as intended from 1 March, we recommend the following:

- a plan of compensation – developed with key stakeholders - for impacted marine businesses to take effect within 2 months; and
- development of a significant funded and sustained (minimum of 3 years with annual review) education campaign developed with key stakeholders and aimed at promoting boating and boat-based fishing across Tasmania.

BIA would welcome the opportunity to meet and discuss this matter. For any follow ups, please contact Neil Patchett, General Manager Government & Public Relations on e., neil@bia.org.au or m., 0418 279 465.

BIA Background

The Boating Industry Association Ltd (BIA) is the peak industry body in Australia representing 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. BIA is an advocate for boaters and the boating lifestyle and supports safe, responsible, and enjoyable boating. BIA has members in all States and Territories.

The BIA reported national industry turnover last year of more than \$10.2 billion with around 35,000 people employed across more than 2,000 businesses. Seventy-five per cent of BIA members are in small family businesses, employing local workers and supporting local communities.

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