



LOGIN

SUBSCRIBE

# Broome Advertiser

Fishing State Politics WA News

## WA business owner to lose money amid permanent commercial fishing ban along 900km of WA coastline



**Charlton Hart** The West Australian

Wed, 3 December 2025 2:28PM [Comments](#) +

Charlton Hart



Drew Clowes runs Fremantle's Jazz Fishing Charters and is the only operator in the area still running trips seven-days a week, which are booked into early next year. Credit: Michael Wilson/The West Australian

- Commercial demersal fishing will be permanently banned across nearly 900km of WA coastline in one of the toughest moves by the Cook Government to restore devastated fish breeding stocks.
- The West Coast bioregion, which stretches from Black Point in the South West to Kalbarri in the north, will become exclusively recreational fishing only, for species such pink snapper, red emperor and dhufish.

Commercial fishing will cease from January 1 and the Government will buy back existing commercial fishing licences.

ADVERTISEMENT

A ban on recreational fishing for demersal species will remain in place until spring 2027.


Charter fishing in the Perth metropolitan area will close from December 16.

Operators will be able to continue catching demersal fish under a tag system in the remainder of the West Coast zone, within a reduced annual catch limit of 25 tonnes.

Drew Clowes runs Fremantle's Jazz Fishing Charters and is the only operator in the area still running trips seven-days a week, which are booked into early next year.

He's not sure whether the new restrictions will allow him to continue.



 Jazz Charters owner Drew Clowes said he has mixed emotions. Credit: Michael Wilson/The West Australian

“I’ve got mixed emotions – its good for fisheries and the fish – but obviously not great for small business like myself,” Mr Clowes said.

“We’re booked out to the end of the year every day, and then I think our weekends are out till March.

“So for us, it’s a real kick in the back pocket.”

Mr Clowes said he would instead target more abundance species such as yellow tail and tuna.

Realistically, instead of offering tourists and thrillseekers the adventure of hooking a big fish at sea, a day spent cruising the water may become his only alternative business option.

The Premier acknowledged the impact the reforms would have on WA businesses and anglers, which had become necessary to prevent species' extinction.

“These are difficult decisions for Government, they're tough decisions. We acknowledge that and it will impact everyone,” Mr Cook said, while announcing the changes on Wednesday.

“We want to make sure our kids and our grandkids can enjoy fishing for years to come.

“We're not winning the fight, so we're making the tough decision today to really create that reset and make sure that we preserve these fish species for the future.”

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development's assessment of fish stocks shows WA's spawning biomass of dhufish, northern snapper and southern snapper are at least 80 per cent depleted.

*The price of fish in supermarkets, in restaurants and cafes and at the fish and chip shop is going to go up because of this in the middle of a cost of living crisis, and that's on this State Government.*

The catch limit for commercial demersal fishing will be halved in the Kimberley, Pilbara and South Coast bioregions from January 1 as part of the reforms.

Fisheries Minister Jackie Jarvis said the risk of species becoming extinct “demanded” Government action.

“To support the reforms the State Government has invested \$29.2 million to help stock recover,” she said.

“The package includes \$20m set aside for a buyout of the commercial line and gill net fisheries in that West Coast zone (and) \$1.9m to support alternative recreational fishing experiences.


“There will be \$3.3m for tackle shop rebates for recreational boat owners to support both recreational boat fishers (and) our independent tackle shops.”

Opposition Leader Basil Zempilas said action needed to be taken to replenish fish stocks.

“But I will also say the rather drastic measures that have been announced today (are) the symptom of nine years of mismanagement,” he said.

“Dave Kelly was the fisheries manager, Don Punch was the fisheries manager, both of them failed to address these issues in a significant way during their time as the minister responsible, and as a result, we’ve had Minister Jarvis having to announce these very significant changes today.”



 The Premier acknowledged the impact the reforms would have on WA businesses. Credit: Michael Wilson/The West Australian

Mr Zempilas said the reforms would have a widespread affect and hurt many small businesses and communities in the State.

“Even those who don’t go out on a boat and go fishing, the real impact is going to be felt by them,” he said.

“The price of fish in supermarkets, in restaurants and cafes and at the fish and chip shop is going to go up because of this in the middle of a cost of living crisis, and that’s on this State Government.”

The reforms have received widespread support from industry bodies including Recfishwest, the Australian Fishing Trade Association and the Australian Marine Conservation Society.

“This is the biggest reset in fisheries management in WA’s history,” Recfishwest’s Andrew Roland said.

“This is bloody tough, and it’s going to come to a shock for a lot of people, and it will take them quite a while to absorb what all this means.

“This is short-term pain for long-term gain, the winner in the long run here is both the fish and the fishing community. “