

Impact Analysis Statement

Summary IAS

Details

Lead department	Department of Primary Industries
Name of the proposal	Fisheries Legislation (Barramundi and Other Matters) Amendment Regulation 2026 Amendment of the Fisheries (Commercial Fisheries) Regulation 2019, Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019 and the Fisheries Declaration 2019 to prohibit the commercial take of barramundi by nets in the area south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland–New South Wales border and implement management changes for tropical rocklobster and black jewfish to improve commercial industry viability.
Submission type	Summary Impact Analysis Statement
Title of related legislative or regulatory instrument	Fisheries Legislation (Barramundi and Other Matters) Amendment Regulation 2026
Date of issue	September 2026

Proposal type	Details
Minor and machinery in nature	Fisheries are an open-access resource that, if left unregulated, will result in their over-exploitation. Regulation of fishing activities seeks to limit current fishing activities to maintain the long-term sustainability of fisheries resources for fishers and the broader Queensland community. <u>Shorten the tropical rocklobster annual closure</u> The proposal is to amend the Fisheries Declaration 2019 to shorten the regulated period for tropical rocklobsters in northern rocklobster regulated waters. Tropical rocklobsters in northern rocklobster regulated waters (approximately, north of Princess Charlotte Bay on the east coast 350 km north of Cairns) may not be taken or possessed during a regulated period defined as from 1 October to 31 December. The purpose of this regulated period, or closure to fishing, is to protect the species during their spawning period. The tropical rocklobster stock is considered sustainable and at minimal risk of overfishing. The risk to the stock of shortening the closure is considered low given that output controls in the form of catch quotas and minimum size limits remain in place, as do the protections for egg bearing lobsters and lobsters with tar-spots. There are currently 27 primary commercial fishing licences with an R fishery symbol, allowing them to operate in the crayfish and rocklobster fishery. Of these licences, 8 own tropical rocklobster quota, allowing them to retain rocklobster up to the quota limit (weight equivalent) they own.

	Seven currently have tropical rocklobster quota remaining available for use in the current quota (fishing) season. Extension of the fishing season will enable effective utilisation of the remaining quota for these licences. Due to export market dynamics, commercial fishers operating in the rocklobster fishery (fishery symbol R) would experience economic benefits from a shortened tropical rocklobster regulated period, subsequently extending their annual fishing season by another month. Extending the season to include October will allow fishers to support more economical utilisation of the total allowable commercial catch (TACC), particularly ahead of Christmas and the New Year. It is proposed to shorten the overall duration of the regulated period for tropical rocklobsters in northern rocklobster regulated waters by one (1) month. The new dates for the regulated period are proposed to be 1 November to 31 December. The shortening of the regulated period will also apply to recreational take and possession of lobsters in northern rocklobster regulated waters, however recreational catch and effort is limited north of Princess Charlotte Bay due to the relatively low number of people accessing the area. Recreational fishers remain subject to a possession limit of five (5) lobsters per person, or ten (10) per boat (with two (2) or more people on board) further minimising recreational take. Public consultation was conducted on this proposal between 3 July 2026 and 31 July 2026 through the release of the Queensland freshwater and marine fisheries management proposals discussion paper, with 80% of respondents supporting shortening the tropical rocklobster regulated period by one month. Of those respondents who did not support the extension, key reasons included sustainability concerns and the need for greater stock protection rather than increased fishing access. However, as other management controls will remain in place and there is no change to commercial catch quotas, risks to the long-term sustainability of the fishery are low. Extending the fishing season without adjusting other regulatory parameters, will provide greater flexibility to fishers without adversely impacting the long-term sustainability of the fishery. The proposal is a routine update involving no substantive regulatory and policy change and does not increase costs or regulatory burden on business or the community. This proposal is minor and machinery and no further regulatory impact analysis is required under the Better Regulation Policy.
--	---

Prohibit the take of barramundi using commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border

What is the nature, size and scope of the problem? What are the objectives of government action?

Background

Access to commercial fishing in Queensland is provided through a primary commercial fishing licence (PCFL) and the fishing symbols endorsed on that licence. Prior to 1 January 2024, commercial access to barramundi in the area south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay), referred to as southeast Queensland, was limited and barramundi could not be taken using commercial nets. The commercial line fishery under the L1 symbol was the only symbol authorised to retain barramundi in this area.

Recreational fishing for barramundi in tidal waters of southeast Queensland has always been a permitted activity. Within southeast Queensland, it is difficult to quantify the number of recreational anglers which target and retain this species; however, consultation feedback from recreational fishing respondents provided insight that barramundi is primarily targeted for catch-and-release fishing. This is further supported by the low records of recreational fishing of barramundi collected through the 'Boat Ramp Survey' program, where at surveyed ramps throughout southeast Queensland, fishers reported released fish as 85% of all records for barramundi since 2019.

Problem identification

From 1 January 2024, regulatory amendments to the Fishers (Commercial Fisheries) 2019 and Fisheries Declaration 2019 expanded the commercial access to barramundi in southeast Queensland to include operators in three commercial net fisheries authorised by the N10, N15 and K1-8 fishery symbols. This increased the number of commercial operators in the area authorised to access and retain barramundi. Since the commencement of these arrangements, at least 20 PCFL holders have reported taking barramundi using commercial nets in southeast Queensland south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay).

Following these amendments, concerns were raised by community stakeholders regarding the status of the stock for barramundi in this area, particularly south of Kauri Creek to the Queensland-New South Wales border.

In response, the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) conducted a review of these management arrangements. The review highlighted that fishing pressure within southeast Queensland has historically comprised of commercial and recreational line fishing, with commercial net fishing of barramundi not being previously permitted in these areas. In addition, departmental stock assessments and stock status reports for barramundi in this area were either absent, or harvest with other apparatus prior to the permitting of take of barramundi using commercial nets considered negligible.

The most recent stock assessment for barramundi published in 2019 did not include this area due to data limitations, preventing robust stock assessment modelling. This data paucity presents uncertainty about the stock status and health of barramundi in southeast Queensland and has not been used to set total allowable catch (TAC) limits for barramundi in this area. Within a TAC limit, a discrete prescribed commercial catch (PCC) limit has not been historically used to manage barramundi in the southeast Queensland area. Significant information and data is required to establish a fit and proper, scientifically defensible PCC limit. The PCC which enables net fishers to take barramundi is competitive and not spatially separated between the historical area and the recently accessible area of southeast Queensland, instead it is compared in a single management unit – east coast inshore management region 5 (MR5). The current PCC allocation for barramundi in MR5 for commercial fishers is 18 000 kilograms and was set based on historical harvest levels prior to September 2021 when the N10, N15 and K1-8 fishery symbols could not access the stock.

The 2023 *South-East Coast stock, which occurs in the Southeast Queensland area, stock status for Barramundi* identified that fishing was unlikely to be having a negative impact on the stock and it was not subject to targeted fishing. Since this assessment, however, take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets has expanded in MR5 to south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay).

It is widely suggested that the barramundi population in this area may function as a population which cannot self-sustain through means of natural reproduction. However, there is no published scientific evidence to confirm this suggestion. Numerous scientific studies on fish stocks within Australia have demonstrated the effects of climate change and range extension for various sub-tropical species including barramundi. It is therefore possible that a population of barramundi in southeast Queensland may be established if cumulative fishing pressure impacts are managed.

As a result of the review and the available scientific information, DPI commenced public consultation to gauge community sentiments on the arrangements and propose a prohibition on the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets in southeast Queensland to address stock sustainability concerns.

Given the absence of a robust stock assessment and the uncertainty regarding the stock structure and future productivity, a precautionary management principle in the form of a prohibition is considered appropriate. To align with the *Fisheries Act 1994* (Fisheries Act), precautionary management may be applied when there is uncertainty regarding the potential impact of fishing on fish stocks.

The access to commercial fishing of barramundi in tidal waters of southeast Queensland is authorised within the Fisheries Act and stipulated in the subordinate legislation of the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019, Fisheries (Commercial Fisheries) Regulation 2019 and Fisheries Declaration 2019.

The access to recreational fishing of barramundi in tidal waters of Southeast Queensland is stipulated within the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019 and the Fisheries Declaration 2019.

Prior to 1 January 2024, recreational fishers throughout southeast Queensland were permitted to catch and keep barramundi. These arrangements are not subject to any proposed changes. Recreational fishers raised the greatest number of concerns regarding commercial access to, and stock sustainability of, barramundi in southeast Queensland following the commencement of arrangements to permit the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets. The proposed amendments will apply only to prohibiting the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets. This approach is intended to address concerns stock sustainability while maintaining the existing recreational fishing arrangements.

Objectives of government action

The objective of government action is to provide for the use, conservation and enhancement of the community's fisheries resources by improving the outcomes for the stock of barramundi in southeast Queensland. This will allow for the better management of impacts on barramundi stocks in a way that maximises the potential economic, social and cultural benefits to the community.

What options were considered?

Option 1 - No action

The existing provisions could be allowed to remain in place to allow commercial take of barramundi using commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border to continue.

Option 2 - Prohibit the take of barramundi using commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border

This option amends provisions of the Fisheries (Commercial Fisheries) Regulation 2019 to prohibit the take of barramundi using commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border. The provisions would apply to all commercial nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) used in the General netting and ocean beach fisheries (K1–8), the Net fishery (east coast no. 4) (N10) and the Net fishery (no. 15) (N15). These amendments will deliver equivalent management arrangements for commercial net fishing for barramundi that were in force prior to 1 January 2024 for the area of MR5 south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border.

What are the impacts?

Option 1 - No action

This option will continue to permit the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets, allowing approximately 20 fishers to continue to take barramundi using commercial fishing nets between Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border. This amounts to approximately 900 kilograms of harvest per annum based on recent harvest levels.

The targeting of barramundi by nets in this area provides benefit through improved employment and economic opportunities for commercial net fishers. This harvest also has flow on benefits to the community with the supply of seafood and the supporting industries required to continue this supply, including the seafood processing sector, the vessel and gear maintenance businesses and the transport costs among other industries.

Recreational fishers will experience reduced access to the barramundi in southeast Queensland due to the shared nature of the resource. This continued access and harvesting arrangements is likely to undermine the long-term sustainability of current and establishing barramundi populations. At its most extreme case, this could result in the localised extinction of barramundi in southeast Queensland, further impacting recreational and commercial line and net fishers.

This option would not address the concerns raised by stakeholders concerning the health and status of the barramundi stock in the area and the current extensive tension between sectors. This option also fails to apply and balance the principles of ecologically sustainable development as required within the Fisheries Act.

Option 2 - Prohibit the take of barramundi using commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border

Prohibiting the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border will, in the short-term, financially impact commercial net fishers' annual income. Longer-term financial impacts are not yet known given the uncertainty whether the level of harvest is sustainable in this area.

Data collected from commercial fishers and marketing establishments estimate the beach price for whole barramundi at \$11.34. Based on this beach price, total annual cost to the commercial fishing industry is estimated at approximately \$10,200. While the reduction in market access will be removed for barramundi, commercial net fishing target species such as king threadfin, shark and mullet will remain permitted to be retained, supporting the continuing viability of the east coast inshore finfish (ECIF) fishery.

Prohibiting the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets is not expected to reduce the number of netting operators in southeast Queensland as there are no operators exclusively targeting barramundi or who have the species representing their largest harvest during a trip. While this is unlikely to resolve

community concern surrounding the general use of commercial nets in this area, it is expected that prohibiting the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets will assist in alleviating sectoral tension.

The impact on access to locally sourced, wild net-caught barramundi from this option is estimated to be an immediate annual reduction of up to 900 kilograms of harvest (based on data to 2025). This reduction may be offset by continued access to harvest of barramundi by the line fishery (L1) and net fisheries (N10, N15 and K1-8 fishery symbols) north of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay). While this represents a small proportion of the overall commercial catch, it may have a localised economic impact on affected fishers.

Any reduction to locally caught fish in southeast Queensland will cause some market disruptions, particularly for new markets established after 1 January 2024.

For the protection of a fish, a commercial fisher who holds the relevant fishery symbol does not have a right to take the fish, rather they hold an access right. The proposed amendments engage a person's property rights because primary commercial fishing licences which entitle the holder to participate in the commercial fisheries for which the relevant fishery symbols are written on his or her licence, and fishery symbols, have property-like characteristics. However, this impact on property rights is considered reasonable to achieve the intent of protecting the southeast Queensland barramundi stock.

Under the Fisheries Act, compensation is payable for various changes to a fisher's access, unless that change was made for protecting a fish. Permitting the take of barramundi using commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) is considered a fishing pressure risk, which is not scientifically justified to maintain protections for a fish. Compensation is therefore not payable under the Fisheries Act.

Ensuring that up to 900 kilograms per annum of barramundi remains within tidal waters of southeast Queensland is expected to have numerous benefits. Ecological benefits, most importantly, include the potential establishment of a self-sustaining barramundi population. While access may shift to recreational fishers, data and consultation feedback collected from fishers indicates a higher tendency for catch and release practices, resulting in fewer removals of fish from this population.

This option strikes a balance between addressing stock concerns, minimising overall economic impacts and ensuring sustainability of the stock is maintained. In addition, the improvement of recreational and commercial line fishing access is likely to increase overall generation of economic return to the state of Queensland.

Who was consulted?

DPI released the *Review of the harvest of barramundi by nets in southeast Queensland* discussion paper between 13 December 2025 and 31 January 2026 for public consultation. This was supported by an online survey and several in-person meetings to discuss proposals regarding the commercial take of barramundi using nets in southeast Queensland. Targeted consultation during the public consultation period included engagement sessions with members of the commercial and recreational sector on this issue which enabled an opportunity to further understand all views of those impacted by the previous decision and the proposed decision.

DPI sought to understand the perspectives of commercial fishers, recreational fishers, and the broader community regarding the current management arrangements and the proposed changes. The consultation process also aimed to assess the potential social, economic, and environmental impacts of the proposed changes. A total of 534 responses were received on the discussion paper comprised of 476 survey responses and 58 written submissions.

Eighty-seven per cent of respondents were in favour of prohibiting the commercial take of barramundi by nets in the area south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland–New South Wales border.

However, there was a significant difference in support between sectors. Ninety-three per cent of recreational responders support the prohibition, while 84 per cent of commercial fishers did not support the prohibition. The peak body representing the commercial fishing industry provided a written submission expressing concern that if the precautionary principle is being enacted to pursue this change, then all sectors must be prohibited from taking barramundi south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay). Recreational fishing respondents expressed that the catch-and-release fishing practice is the preferred fishing method for barramundi.

Public submissions highlighted strong support for the protection of barramundi stocks in southeast Queensland from take with commercial fishing nets, particularly given the uncertainty surrounding the stock status in this area.

What is the recommended option and why?

Option 2, to amend the Fisheries (Commercial Fisheries) Regulation 2019 to the take of barramundi with commercial fishing nets south of Kauri Creek (Tin Can Bay) to the Queensland-New South Wales border, is the recommended option. This option delivers necessary actions to promote the protection of a fish while addressing concerns about the sustainability of barramundi stocks in Southeast Queensland.

The proposed regulation change is expected to have limited economic impact, affecting a small number of commercial fishers and reducing the local supply of barramundi by approximately 900 kilograms annually. Recreational fishers will retain access to barramundi in the area, and most recreational fishing effort is expected to remain focused on catch-and-release practices.

Changes to black jewfish management arrangements including increasing the recreational possession limit, introducing a seasonal closure and permitting trunking at sea

What is the nature, size and scope of the problem? What are the objectives of government action?

Background

Black jewfish is a highly valued target species to both commercial and recreational fishers, with high economic benefit to industry and a strong recreational social benefit to Central and North Queensland fishers. Since 2024, at least 40 commercial fishers have reported harvest of black jewfish from one of the five management regions in the ECIF fishery. Peak recreational catch levels were presumed to occur from the 1990s to early 2000s and it is understood the recreational fishery for black jewfish on the east coast has shifted from a "food fish" to a "sports fish" or secondary target when targeting other species. However, it is difficult to quantify the numbers of recreational fishers accessing east coast black jewfish.

Following significant concern of over-exploitation in 2018, the Queensland Government introduced precautionary management arrangements for black jewfish applying to all sectors. Several measures were introduced, including a competitive 20-tonne TACC limit, a reduction of the recreational possession limit from two (2) to one (1) fish per person, and a boat limit of two (2) fish per boat with two (2) or more people on board.

Black jewfish form predictable year-round or seasonal aggregations, which make them particularly susceptible to targeted fishing practices. This aggregating behaviour not only allows for easy targeting but can also mask population declines, for example, catch rates remaining stable even if the population declines. Research published in 2024 identified that black jewfish in Central Queensland had a spawning season spanning from October to March. No significant latitudinal difference in spawning timing was found between the two Central Queensland regions studied, suggesting a broadly consistent spawning period across the Central Queensland coast. Although not part of the research, it is assumed this

spawning period is indicative for the east coast of North Queensland. Under current arrangements, the commercial fishing season commences on 1 January each year under a competitive TACC implemented through a PCC, resulting in a substantial proportion of the catch occurring during the peak period of reproductive activity. A recommendation from the research was for the peak harvest not to occur during the spawning period to support long-term sustainability of the population.

In 2021, a stock assessment of east coast black jewfish estimated that the biomass was most likely at or above the target reference point of 60% unfished biomass as outlined in the *East coast inshore fishery harvest strategy: 2021–2026*. However, it also had considerable uncertainty due to high reliance on catch rate indicators. The assessment recommended that there could be an increase to harvest through a precautionary TAC limit across all sectors of 90 tonnes. Consistent with the harvest strategy catch share arrangements, the commercial allocation was increased from 20 tonnes to 54 tonnes in 2023. However, there was no corresponding increase to the recreational possession or boat limit arrangements to reflect the overall TAC across all sectors and harvest strategy catch share arrangements.

Commercial fishers have raised concerns regarding the requirement to retain black jewfish whole while at sea. Current form requirements were originally introduced to address stock sustainability and black-market concerns associated with black jewfish swim bladders. However, industry feedback indicates that the inability to process fish at sea imposes operational inefficiencies and unnecessary costs, particularly on longer fishing trips. 'Trunking' is a method of processing which involves the removal of the head and offal of the fish. Processing fish at sea helps preserve product quality and improves storage efficiency (compared with whole fish) by removing unmarketable and bulky components of the fish.

Problem identification

Current management of the east coast black jewfish stock does not fully align with the best published scientific information and arrangements for accessing the fishery. These arrangements limit the opportunity for ensuring access to the resource is allocated in a way that maximises the potential economic, social and cultural benefits to the community.

Despite evidence identifying a clearly defined spawning period, existing arrangements continue to allow concentrated harvest during peak reproductive activity. Because black jewfish aggregate during spawning, fishers can efficiently target spawning fish, increasing the risk of reduced reproductive output, localised depletion and long-term future stock decline. This risk is heightened by uncertainty in stock assessments and the species' aggregating behaviour, which can mask population declines through stable catch rates. Consequently, existing management arrangements may not adequately protect the stock's reproductive capacity and long-term sustainability.

Recreational possession limits remain at precautionary levels introduced in 2018 despite stock assessments indicating improved stock status and supporting increased harvest opportunities. The current harvest strategy does not necessitate an increase to the recreational possession limit. However, the recreational fishing sector has expressed concerns that the increase in commercial catch allocation following the 2022 stock assessment was not matched by an increase in recreational access. An anticipated benefit of a spawning closure is that it could maintain the recreational sector's catch share allocation under the harvest strategy while supporting an increase to the recreational possession limit.

Current form requirements requiring black jewfish to remain whole while at sea impose operational and economic constraints on commercial fishing businesses. These requirements can reduce storage efficiency, limit product quality outcomes and increase costs for fishers undertaking extended trips. While originally justified to support compliance and reduce black-market risks, modern and improved compliance measures are effective in managing these risks while allowing processing flexibility for commercial fishers.

Objectives of government action

The objectives of government action are to:

- improve the sustainability of black jewfish along the east coast of Queensland by introducing a scientifically informed regulated period (i.e. a spawning closure). Although a spawning closure will reduce some temporal access to fishing, it is expected that there will be some short and long-term ecological and economic benefits for the commercial fishing industry and will be offset through an overall improvement of access to more harvest (when considered with the proposed increase in recreational possession limits) for the recreational fishery
- ensure catch share arrangements remain consistent with the *East coast inshore fishery harvest strategy: 2021–2026* and provide recreational fishers with access arrangements that reflect published stock status; and
- improve commercial fishing efficiency and product quality outcomes by reducing unnecessary operational constraints.

What options were considered?Option 1: Maintain the status quo

No changes would be made to existing management arrangements under Option 1. This would retain:

- year-round access to black jewfish
- the recreational possession limit of one (1) fish
- existing requirements that black jewfish must remain whole while at sea.

Option 2: Amending Fisheries Subordinate Legislation

Option 2 amends fisheries subordinate legislation to implement the response to the best available scientific literature and feedback from consultation. Amendments to the Fisheries Declaration 2019 and the Fisheries (General) Regulation 2019 are required to introduce a regulated period, increase recreational possession limits and allow the trunking of east coast black jewfish by commercial fishers at sea by:

- regulating the taking or possessing of black jewfish in a regulated period of 1 November to 31 January for the east coast (i.e. introducing a spawning closure period)
- increasing the recreational possession limit from one (1) fish to two (2) fish and the boat limit from two (2) fish to four (4) fish for the east coast
- allowing trunking of black jewfish at sea for the east coast, provided the swim bladder remains naturally attached; and
- introducing a minimum trunked size limit of 57cm for black jewfish for the east coast.

What are the impacts?

Option 1: Maintain the status quo

Maintaining the status quo will allow commercial and recreational fishers throughout Central and North Queensland to maintain year-round access to targeting black jewfish. This option increases the risk to the population sustainability of the black jewfish stock, which has been informed by science. This potential depletion could cause impacts to the long-term viability of targeting black jewfish by the recreational and commercial fishing sectors and potentially impacts industry's future access to high value domestic and future export markets. At the most extreme of cases, the targeting and harvest of spawning individuals may disrupt recruitment potential for a species, causing localised depletion and stock collapses. This has been previously demonstrated in other fish stocks.

In addition, due to sectoral catch share arrangements within the *East coast inshore fishery harvest strategy 2021-2026*, maintaining the status quo and not progressing a regulated period will mean there is no reduced offset to recreational harvest levels which enables an increase to the recreational possession and boat limits. If the regulated period is not progressed and recreational possession and boat limits are, catch allocations under the harvest strategy will not be maintained. To mitigate this, either the TACC limit arrangements will need to be increased without a stock assessment confirmation and risks the sustainability of the stock, or Ministerial intervention to amend the harvest strategy would be required for the new catch share arrangements.

Maintaining current form requirements would also continue to impose operational inefficiencies on commercial fishers, particularly during longer fishing trips, and would limit opportunities to improve product quality and storage efficiency.

Option 2: Amending Fisheries Subordinate Legislation

Introducing a regulated period will restrict commercial and recreational fisher's access to targeting or retaining east coast black jewfish during the period of 1 November to 31 January of each year.

There is expected to be a reduction in the overall fishing mortality of this species despite the potential for some impacts associated with an increase in post-release mortality, caused by accidental capture and poor release practices by fishers when targeting other species.

Other impacts include market disruption caused by prohibiting the take of black jewfish during this period. However, as a primary market is for the swim bladder of this species, the reduction to access will be offset partly by increased economic yield per fish landed offered by the better seasonal conditions for the swim bladders. This is due to the poorer recovery rate from whole fish to meat and swim bladder during this time compared with the rest of the year.

The proposed implementation for a regulated period from 1 November to 31 January aligns with the barramundi regulated period for the east coast of Queensland. This regulated period is well established, and commercial and recreational fishers are familiar with the arrangements to not target or take key inshore species such as barramundi. It is expected that a regulated period for black jewfish on the east coast will be acknowledged and complied with appropriately.

Increasing the recreational possession limit from one (1) to two (2) fish will improve recreational fishing opportunities and better align arrangements with stock status and harvest strategy outcomes. The increase is not expected to materially affect stock sustainability, particularly when implemented alongside the regulated period.

Permitting trunking at sea will provide commercial fishers with greater operational flexibility, improve storage efficiency and enhance product quality outcomes, particularly for fishers undertaking multi-day trips. Compliance risks associated with processing fish at sea will be mitigated through retention of the

swim bladder, the introduction of a trunked size limit and the use of weight-conversion factors for quota reporting.

All other black jewfish management arrangements, including the current TACC and minimum size limit, would remain unchanged.

Who was consulted?

Following the 2021 black jewfish stock assessment, there was strong support from commercial fishers to not target black jewfish during their identified spawning period.

Prior to publishing the *Queensland freshwater and marine fisheries management proposals* discussion paper, the department consulted with the East Coast Inshore Fishery Working Group on 16 April 2026 where management of black jewfish on the east coast was discussed. Participants generally agreed that a regulated period would provide additional protection for the stock and expressed support for alignment with the east coast barramundi regulated period to improve regulatory consistency and reduce complexity for fishers taking both species. There was endorsement from the working group to consider permitting commercial fishers to trunk black jewfish at sea and changes to the recreational possession limits.

Public consultation was conducted between 3 July 2026 and 31 July 2026 through the release of the *Queensland freshwater and marine fisheries management proposals* discussion paper. A total of 178 submissions were received from Traditional Owners, commercial fishers, recreational stakeholders, charter operators, the conservation sector, and interested community members. Recreational fishers represented the largest respondent group (58.5 per cent), followed by interested community members (9.9 per cent) and stocking groups (9.6 per cent).

Eighty-nine per cent of respondents supported introducing a regulated period between 1 November to 31 January for the east coast, with majority support across all sectors. Feedback was received questioning the need for the regulated period given low commercial catch and recreational possession limits.

Seventy-five per cent supported increasing the east coast black jewfish recreational possession and boat limits to two (2) fish per person and four (4) fish per boat (with 2 or more people on board), with majority support across all sectors. Commercial fishing responses that were not supportive called for greater protection, with others suggesting that any increased harvest arrangements should favour the commercial sector. Recreational fishers who did not support the proposed change considered existing limits adequate given the size of black jewfish. Conservation responses that opposed the increase cited no clear environmental benefit and concerns about existing take and illegal harvest.

Seventy-three per cent supported introducing trunking of east coast black jewfish as a new form requirement (with a minimum size limit of 57 cm) for commercial fishers, with majority support across all sectors. Of those who did not support the introduction of this new form, key feedback included uncertainty about what trunking means, broader sustainability concerns about commercial targeting of black jewfish, protection of larger breeding fish, and concerns about overall commercial fishing pressure. Some respondents raised compliance and enforcement risks, including the potential for trunking to make measuring fish more difficult and to increase opportunities for black-market exploitation of swim bladders.

Targeted and public consultation has strongly supported proposed management changes for black jewfish for the east coast, and no stakeholder group provided evidence demonstrating that the amendments would impose substantial impacts on businesses or individuals. Stakeholder concerns regarding sustainability of stocks were considered in the overall package of reforms. The increased recreational possession and boat limits were proposed alongside the introduction of a regulated period, which is expected to provide additional protection to spawning fish during the period of highest reproductive activity.

What is the recommended option and why?

Option 2 is the recommended option for east coast black jewfish: to introduce a regulated period from 1 November to 31 January; increasing the recreational possession limit from one (1) fish to two (2) fish per person and from two (2) fish to four (4) fish per boat; and permitting trunking at sea for commercial fishers with the introduction of a minimum trunked size limit of 57cm.

Implementing this option will ensure the management arrangements for black jewfish on the east coast of Queensland align with the best available information on promoting sustainability of the stock while providing long term social and economic benefits to commercial and recreational fishers through reduced business constraints and increased access opportunities.

Government action is required through legislation change to ensure the long-term sustainability of black jewfish on the east coast, which will improve overall access and economic opportunities for the commercial and recreational fishing sectors. Changes to recreational possession limits align with catch share arrangements under the harvest strategy and will improve recreational fishing opportunities and changes to form requirements will reduce business constraints on commercial fishers.

Impact assessment

	First full year	First 10 years**
Direct costs – <i>Compliance costs*</i>	N/A	N/A
Direct costs – <i>Government costs</i>	N/A	N/A

Signed


Graeme Bolton
Director-General

Date: 04/09/2026



The Honourable Anthony Perrett MP
Minister for Primary Industries

Date: 14/09/2026