

# REGIONAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

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## Agency

Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA) Fisheries and Aquaculture

### 1. Title of the initiative

Implementing a new registration system, management arrangements and fee structure for recreational mesh net fishing in Lake George.

### 2. Issue to be addressed

The recreational fishing sector is a significant contributor to the State's economy as well as being a major recreational pursuit of South Australians, and interstate and international visitors. Recreational fishers target a variety of species from different platforms including boats, beaches and jetties using a variety of gear types, including mesh nets in specific areas, including Lake George in the South East.

Currently, individuals who hold a recreational net registration can register one or two nets for use in Lake George for a three-year period with a right of application to renew; however, these nets may only be used by the individual who has registered them. The existing legislation does not allow any other person to apply for a recreational mesh net registration, with no new registrations being issued since 1995.

In 2013, the Wattle Range Council and Lake George Management Committee presented a proposal to PIRSA for restructuring the management framework for recreational mesh net registrations in Lake George. The proposal was for existing net registrations to be extinguished, and subsequently issued on application on an annual basis for a period of one year, similar to the current recreational rock lobster pot registration system.

### 3. Region(s) impacted by the proposal

The Limestone Coast, specifically around Beachport and the area of the Wattle Range Council

### 4. Stakeholders Affected by the proposed initiative

Recreational fishers with current netting registrations

Recreational fishers with an interest in gaining a registration

Wattle Range Council and the Lake George Management Committee

RecFish SA and its associated organisations

### 5. Stakeholders Consulted

Recreational fishers with current netting registrations

RecFish SA

Lake George Management Committee

Wattle Range Council

### 6. Consultation

PIRSA has liaised with the Wattle Range Council and Lake George Management Committee throughout this process. Targeted and public consultation has occurred with local Councils, RecFish SA and regional recreational fishing committees through a workshop in early 2014, the release of a discussion paper in September 2014, and a public meeting in Millicent in November 2014 on the issue. Following the outcome of the consultation process, PIRSA met with the Lake George Management Committee to inform them of the results of the public consultation and the refinements that have been made to the proposed management arrangements.

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## 7. Summary of Impacts and Analysis

### 7.1 Economic Factors

Positive economic impacts are also likely to occur through increases in tourism and associated business activities in the Limestone Coast region, in and near Beachport.

Throughout the process to develop these arrangements, including the public consultation period, stakeholders were advised that an annual fee would be the mechanism used to recover all additional costs for new activities associated with research, compliance, licensing and management of these fishing activities. The undertaking of these activities by PIRSA is critical in ensuring the sustainability of proposed recreational netting activities and is consistent with the management approach PIRSA applies towards achieving sustainable outcomes relating to other fishing activities administered under the *Fisheries Management Act 2007*.

### 7.2 Social Factors

The benefits of these changes include positive social impacts through increased and more equitable participation in recreational net fishing activities in Lake George, particularly for younger family members

### 7.3 Environmental Factors

Requirements for fishers to be in attendance of nets and restrictions on the mesh size, length, depth and position of nets set in the water column have been developed to manage impacts on the primary target species Yellow-eye Mullet, and mitigate impacts on non-target species.

Given the possibility of an increase in recreational net registrations under the proposed new arrangements it is important to monitor numbers of individuals who may access the aquatic resources of Lake George on an annual basis and manage their activities. New marking and tagging requirements have been developed to support an effective licensing and compliance program. Effective research and monitoring of fish stocks by SARDI Aquatic Sciences is also important, in order to manage the impact of any increase in fishing activities on the fish stocks in Lake George. Managing an annual system of recreational mesh net registrations (rather than the existing framework of registrations with no end date) would enable PIRSA to more effectively respond to and manage any negative impacts of recreational net fishing in Lake George.

### 7.4 Equity Factors

The proposal aims to allow anyone with an interest in recreational net fishing in Lake George to access the resource in the future, thereby improving equity for all recreational fishers.

## 8. Mitigation

Mitigation strategies are included in the impacts sections of the RIAS

## 9. Coordination

The following Government agencies were consulted in relation to this issue:

Department of the Premier and Cabinet  
Department of State Development

Department of Primary Industries and Regions – Regions SA

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources

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## 10. Local Government

Wattle Range Council are supportive and have been involved in all stages of developing this proposal

## 11. Preferred Option

The preferred option was consistent with the management arrangements that were outlined in the discussion paper.

One change that occurred following the public comment was the lowering of the annual fee from \$200 per annum to \$150 per annum.

## 12. Agency Contact Details

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