



A yellowfin whiting caught in shallow waters. Picture: Scott Coghlan

## Bay a blueprint for success

**RECFIGHWEST**  
■ Andrew Rowland

Recfishwest hopes the successful rejuvenation of the Roebuck Bay fishery will soon be emulated in other fisheries around Western Australia.

The decision to remove commercial netting from Roebuck Bay by buying out professional netters a couple of years ago has been a tremendous success.

The fishing in the bay has improved dramatically and the local recreational fishing community has been the big beneficiary. Barramundi and salmon fishing have reached levels unseen for decades since the change.

We are hopeful similar buyouts could boost other fisheries around WA, with Broome the perfect example of what can be achieved.

One fishery where commercial licence buyouts is an option is in the Peel-Harvey system.

There are currently 11 commercial netters in this estuary, which is becoming increasingly impor-

tant to recreational fishers as Mandurah is swallowed up by the metro area.

What has raised our concerns is a dramatic spike in the commercial catch of yellowfin whiting from under 10 tonne in 2011 to almost 30 tonne in 2015.

It is a similar story in the blue swimmer fishery, with the sustainability of the fishery recognised by recent MSC certification, but the commercial catch growing significantly in recent years.

Recfishwest has major concerns with the future quality of these fisheries and the current resource sharing arrangement. In the Peel crab fishery, the split has shifted from 15 per cent commercial catch to around 60 per cent.

Recfishwest is pushing for a reduction in the commercial effort and has already won support from the Shooters, Fishers and Farmers Party, and from local Liberal candidate Zak Kirkup.

■ Dr Andrew Rowland is the chief executive of Recfishwest.

# River under

**FISHING**  
■ Ben Little

The building spring tides last weekend seemed the perfect chance to pop over the other side of the bay and get among the small creek systems in search of a decent feed of mud crabs.

During bigger tides I like to put the pots in water about an hour before and work them until about an hour after the change of tide.

This helps to keep them on the bottom as the flow begins to slow, enabling any lazy crabs the chance of a cheap and easy feed.

The action we had was incredibly slow. Very small numbers of crabs were caught and those that did come into the boat were too small to keep.

The annual inter-club Barramundi competition between Broome and Derby was held last weekend. Good numbers of anglers hit up their favourite locations to help their club build a solid score to take out the title.

Anglers from both sides of the fence have remained tight-lipped about where the big fish have been caught, but from many accounts the weekend was a heap of fun and the competition very close.

Derby managed to slow down Broome's two-year winning streak, taking out the champion team title for 2016 by only 8cm.

Typically at this time of year, as the temperature increases and



An excellent barramundi caught last month. Picture: Kristie Knight

starts to peak out, the fishing in the Fitzroy system heats up.

However, anglers have been commenting that the river is feeling the effect of commercial netting, which appears to be done as appropriate behaviour by the operator who continues to conduct legal operations within the lower Fitzroy river system.

The regulators have seen numbers of fish over the last couple of seasons decrease and commercial pressure increase.

This pressure is now encroaching into their favourite and pro-

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