



Summary of changes to charter and related rules to boost seafood based tourism

On 3 September 2016, the Premier announced a number of changes to apply to the fishing charter and hospitality industries to cut red tape and allow for a broader range of quality seafood based tourism experiences.

The proposals are:

1. Abolish rock lobster fishing licence for charter based tourists

Under current regulations, participants on fishing charters who want to take lobster (usually by diving) must hold their own Recreational Rock Lobster Fishing Licence. Once the announced changes are implemented, individual tour participants will not need to hold such a licence to fish for lobster. This is similar to the arrangement that currently applies to Recreational Fishing from a Boat Licences.

2. Providing rock lobster to charter vessel tourists

Some charter operators currently provide lobster for their guests, but they are not permitted to advertise this experience as part of the tour, or create an expectation that lobster will be made available on the trip. This is because this type of activity falls within the definition of “commercial purpose”. The changes will mean that charter operators will be able to set a small number of lobster pots to catch a small quantity of lobsters for their guests.

3. Year round rock lobster catch by charter operators

In order to ensure the tourism experience is readily available to tourists, lobster fishing on charter boats will be permitted all year, rather than being restricted to the recreational season (15 October – 30 June).

4. Cooking your recreational catch

There is currently a prohibition on recreationally caught fish being on commercial premises, such as the restaurant in the hotel or eco-lodge where you may be staying, in order to reduce the risk of black market fish sales. This restriction has created difficulties for some tourism operators who want to offer fish storage facilities or to cook up their guest’s recreational catch for them.

The planned regulation changes will now allow accommodation facilities accredited by the Tourism Council of WA to offer fish storage facilities for their guests. Accredited restaurants (including hotel restaurants) will also have the option to cook recreational and charter caught fish for the person who caught the fish.

Important to know

Western rock lobsters taken on charter boats, whether they are caught by tour participants or the tour operator will be considered as part of the recreational (5%) lobster allocation.

Details of the number of pots that can be set and the number of lobster that can be taken on charter boats will be finalised following consultation.

The changes will not affect commercial rock lobster allocations and will not affect the sustainability of rock lobster and fish catches.

The changes are expected to be implemented by the end of 2016. Until that time, existing rules remain in place.

Next steps

Following the Government's broad announcement, the Department of Fisheries has commenced consultation on the implementation details with Recfishwest (the peak body representing the charter industry), the Western Rock Lobster Council, WA Fishing Industry Council, and the Tourism Council of WA.

Further information

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