

## Position statement

Engagement with companies seeking to conduct marine activities within Australian tuna fishing areas

Tuna Australia is the industry association representing statutory fishing right holders and owners, fishing companies, fish processors and sellers, and associate members of the Eastern and Western Tuna and Billfish fisheries of Australia. Our members catch more than 5000 tonnes of premium produce from Australian waters each year delivered to domestic and export markets. Target fish include Yellowfin Tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), Bigeye Tuna (*T. obesus*), Albacore Tuna (*T. alalunga*), Broadbill Swordfish (*Xiphias gladius*) and Striped Marlin (*Tetrapturus audax*). In addition, some members target Southern Bluefin Tuna (*T. maccoyii*).

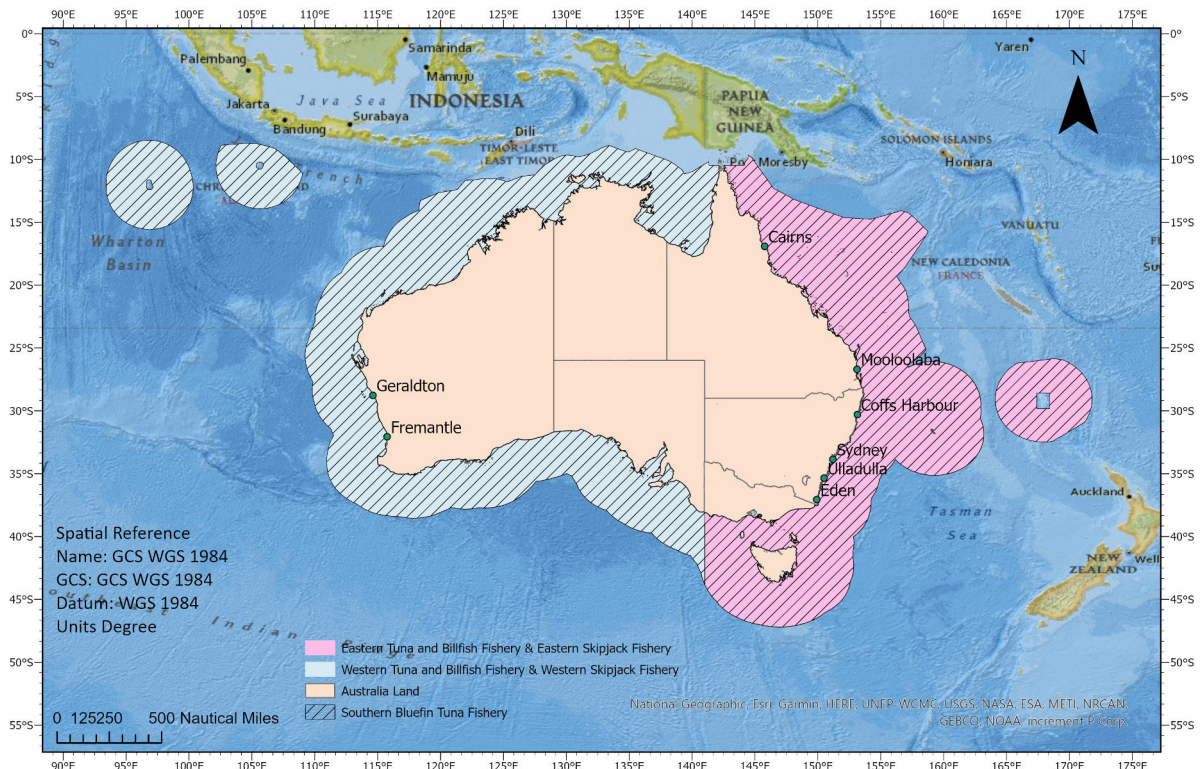
Target fish species are from internationally shared highly migratory fish stocks. Fishing effort changes annually, and interannually, and is related to but not entirely, ocean pelagic habitat. Due to climate change and increased fish abundance, we have observed significant changes to fishing grounds, with some fishing effort moving 1500kms. In addition, our fishers target pelagic baitfish stocks such as sardines, scad and mackerel to support fishing operations.

The goal of TA is to plan, invest and manage the association with main objectives including

- ecological sustainable development;
- improving resource access, property rights and profitability;
- extending and promoting industry practices to stakeholders and the general public;
- enhancing market opportunity and,
- improving safety and workforce development.



Tuna Australia’s members hold more than 90% of the Statutory Fishing Rights (SFRs) issued in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) (Fig. 1.), and more than 70% of SFR holdings in the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF) (Fig. 1.). In addition, members hold 48% of permits issued in the Australian Skipjack fishery. Combined, the fishing area of these fisheries covers the whole of the Australian EEZ. In addition, some Tuna Australia members also hold SFRs in the Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery (Fig. 1.). It is recommended that project proponents should also reach out to the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Industry Association for any proposals in the Southern Bluefin Tuna fishing area.



**Figure 1.** Australian tuna fisheries fishing zones. Image provided by the Australian Fisheries Management Authority.

Given this high level of representation, Tuna Australia is considered the peak body for the longline fishing sector by the Australian government. Therefore, Tuna Australia is considered a ‘relevant person’ consistent with a *person or organisation whose functions, interests or activities may be affected by the activities to be carried out under the environment plan* (NOPSEMA consultation guidelines).

Tuna Australia wishes to be contacted when any proposed activity has the potential to impact vessel navigation, fishing activities, and/or the conservation of fish resources consistent with the *Offshore Petroleum and Greenhouse Gas Storage Act 2006*. In the first instance, Tuna Australia requests a map from proponents of the proposed activity to determine if member

interests may be affected on a case-by-case basis. Where potential effects exist, there is a need for a service agreement.

In recent years there has been increased activity of proponents seeking to access offshore areas for various maritime development. Information provided by proponents is very detailed and requires significant resources to review content, make informed commentary, and consult with members for advice.

In good faith, Tuna Australia has performed this role and provided responses and objections to each activity to which environmental plans relate in addition to other proposed project activities. However, Tuna Australia can no longer coordinate consultation with offshore energy activities on behalf of our members without a service agreement in place.

To provide information to inform environment plans, Tuna Australia requests proponents execute our services agreement and provide information in a written succinct manner including estimated boundaries for extent of planned activity impacts (i.e. artificial light, noise, discharges etc) as well as activities within the operational area.

This advice will be distributed to Tuna Australia members and non-members owning/holding SFRs or permits in the

- ETBF (114 concession holders),
- WTBF (61 concession holders) Tuna and Billfish Fisheries, and
- Australian Skipjack Fishery (West - 14 permit holders; East - 17 permit holders) for comment.

Further details on information, format and time required for consultation can be found in our services agreement. Information provided would be relevant to tuna and billfish fisheries in the area that may affect vessel navigation, fishing activities, and/or the conservation of fish resources based on the planned aspects of the activity, and proposed control measures to manage impacts.

Tuna Australia wishes to engage constructively with project proponents for all situations where there is potential for conflict with vessel navigation, access to fishing area and/or gear, and the biology of target fish and baitfish. Advice provided can change annually due to the dynamic nature of our fisheries. We encourage companies requiring advice from our sector to enter into a consultation services agreement with Tuna Australia to support their applications. Noting that Tuna Australia may be able to provide information on vessel navigation, fishing activities and/or the conservation of fish resources that may be affected that is not publicly available and will be an important input to environmental impact and risk assessment processes.

This position statement is approved by the Tuna Australia board and supported by all Tuna Australia members.