



Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy

Review: draft findings and recommendations

The Bycatch Policy aims to minimise fishing-related impacts on general bycatch species

- The Commonwealth Fisheries Harvest Strategy Policy (CHSP) works with the Commonwealth Fisheries Bycatch Policy to provide a framework for the sustainable management of fisheries managed by the Australian government (Figure 1).
- The Bycatch Policy responds to requirements and objectives of the Australian Government's legislative framework for fisheries management, including the *Fisheries Management Act 1991* and the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*.

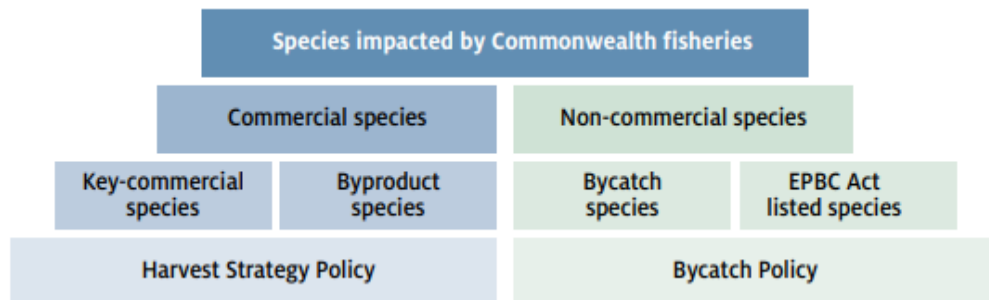


Figure 1 Relationship between the CHSP and the Bycatch Policy



Policy purpose is about right

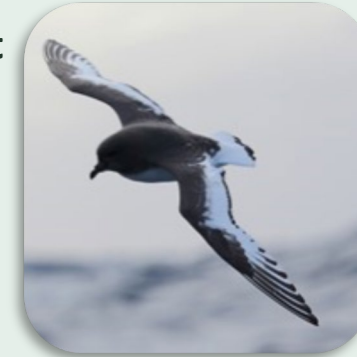
- The Bycatch Policy remains an important tool for guiding management of bycatch in Commonwealth fisheries.
- The review considers the Bycatch Policy should be outcomes-focused and flexible, allowing appropriate prioritisation of resources to implement the requirements of the policy.

Data collection should be improved

- Data is critical to understand impacts on the marine environment. Collection should not only be the responsibility of the fishing industry.
- The review found that the Bycatch Policy should allow for all relevant available data to be used to inform the Ecological Risk Assessment (ERA) and Ecological Risk management processes.

Reporting needs to be transparent

While reporting obligations are currently being met, consultation suggested enhancing performance reporting for better transparency and confidence in bycatch management.



Risk equivalency and assessment

- Accurate and timely data is needed to monitor outcomes and inform adaptive management.
- Integrating robust data systems will ensure the policy is more responsive and dynamic.
- The precautionary principle is crucial, especially when data is lacking, to prevent environmental degradation.

Improved engagement with First Nations is needed to identify interests

- The Bycatch Policy should include principles and priorities for engagement with First Nations people when developing harvest strategies and bycatch management plans
- The review provides in principle support for the development of a schedule of fish species of importance to First Nations people for fisheries managers consideration when developing bycatch management plans.



Review timeline

- June 2023 - review commenced
- October 2023 – Initial Have Your Say process
- September 2024 – Stakeholder workshop
- November 2024 – Draft review report released for public consultation (via Have Your Say)
- Early 2025 – Final report to Minister
- 2025 – Policy revisions (if required)

Review Inputs

- Implementation Review (ABARES)
- Stakeholder feedback