

President's Welcome Note

Dear Members,

Welcome to the second edition of the Gulf of Carpentaria Commercial Fishers Association (GoCCFA) quarterly newsletter for 2025. As we progress through the third quarter, I'm delighted to share positive developments and ongoing efforts that reflect our commitment to a sustainable and thriving commercial fishing industry in the Gulf.

Following the momentum of our last newsletter, which highlighted the King Threadfin research update by DPI and CSIRO under the FRDC-funded project (www.frdc.com.au/project/2022-019) and encouraged feedback on Queensland's draft 25-year primary industries blueprint (consultation closed 8 June 2025), we've made significant strides across multiple fronts.

A major milestone this quarter was the Queensland Government's removal of investment warnings from all state fisheries in June 2025, declaring the industry "open for business." Improved stock assessments prompted this decision, lifting barriers to new investment and signaling renewed confidence in our sector's stability and growth potential.

We've also received confirmation from the Department of their commitment to reapply for Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) status for the Gulf Mudcrab fishery. This is vital for maintaining export opportunities and aligns with efforts to meet environmental standards under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, building on past accreditations and addressing previous revocations.

Claudine Ward and Shawn McAtamney met with the Queensland Fisheries onboard monitoring team to discuss the planned trial of camera equipment in the N3 fishery. We've invited the team to present at our Annual General Meeting (AGM) to provide further details to fishers.

Our executive team has actively engaged with the Department on key management initiatives, including providing detailed feedback on the draft harvest strategy for the L4 (line), N3 (net), N12, and N13 fisheries in the Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fishery. Fisheries Queensland has circulated a draft Harvest Strategy for all Gulf fisheries, and we urge members to review the information available on the GoCCFA website (www.goccca.com.au) before the AGM.



Madeleine Glacken, Fisheries Manager for the Gulf, has been collaborating with our executive, working groups, and individual fishers. Your input is critical, as this harvest strategy will shape the future of our fisheries' management. GoCCFA's feedback has emphasized opposition to additional spatial or permanent ground closures and the need for flexible arrangements under a competitive Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) fishery. These measures aim to minimize discards when TACC limits are reached for Tier 1 and 2 species and prioritize economic sustainability.

Finally, mark your calendars for our Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Friday, 10 October 2025, at 8:00 AM. This will be a key opportunity to review the year, hear presentations from Queensland Fisheries, CSIRO, and DAF Science representatives, and elect our leadership for the coming term.

Thank you for your continued dedication and support. Together, we're steering toward a stronger future for Gulf commercial fishing.

Best regards,

Michael Gater
President
Gulf of Carpentaria Commercial Fishers Association

Sawfish research in northern Australia – commercial fishers collecting data to enable sustainable management

Sawfish are extinct in many places worldwide and although still surviving in northern Australia, there is concern about their population status. Data on sawfish population size and how well they survive capture is therefore very important to inform management.

For the past 2 years researchers at CSIRO have been working with commercial gill net fishers in the Gulf of Carpentaria to obtain data on post release survival of sawfish and collecting tissue samples of sawfish for genetic analysis. This includes training fishers how to safely release sawfish, how to identify the four different sawfish species and how to collect tissue samples for genetic analysis. This research is funded as part of a NESP and FRDC funded Project 3.11 – Multi- fishery collaboration to assess population abundances and post release survival of threatened sawfish in northern Australia

There has been strong support from fishers throughout the Gulf of Carpentaria and this project wouldn't be possible without Industry led sampling and satellite tagging.

Progress includes:

Satellite tagging – survival and movement

- Around 30 sawfish tagged with satellite tags with the data showing very high survival of freshwater sawfish.
- Additional tags will be provided to fishers for deployment in 2026

Genetics – adult population size and connectivity

- Around 300 tissue samples have been collected from the N3 and N12 fisheries. An additional 1000 samples have been collected from NPF vessels and NT fisheries.
- More samples are needed (the more samples we have the better the estimates)

Richard will be in Kurumba in late January 2026 to restock sampling kits and hand out satellite tags.

If you are interested in assisting or have questions, contact Richard Pillans (CSIRO, 0477 704 119)



Images: Richard Pillans and Dave Ward with a 4.5 m freshwater sawfish tagged in the Gulf, Jamie Carter tagging a 5.7 m freshwater sawfish, Kieran Howard releasing a sawfish, narrow sawfish tagged in the N12, DJ and Matty Lane releasing a satellite tagged freshwater sawfish.

Richard Pillans giving a threatened species identification and handling guide to GOCCFA members in Kurumba.

Aquaculture and Fisheries Women's Leadership Scholarships

Partial scholarships valued at \$700 - \$3,000 are available to support participation in one of four leadership and workplace skill development programs. These programs are designed for women at different stages of their careers who are looking to strengthen their leadership capability.

Registrations close Friday 24 October 2025

[Apply here](#)

2026 Awards for Excellence in Women's Leadership

Nominations open for the 2026 Awards for Excellence in Women's Leadership. The Awards are an excellent opportunity to shine a spotlight on a woman or gender-diverse person in your industry who is creating real change for women, girls, and underrepresented groups.

Nominations close 3 October 2025

[Learn more or nominate here](#)

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AGM

Annual General Meeting

Date: 10/10/25

Time: 10am

Venue: Recreational Club

In memorial

It is with heavy hearts that we share the news of the passing of Nicola "Tarzan" Savic, a cherished and long-standing member of our Gulf fishing community. Another dedicated soul from our industry has departed for calmer waters and abundant catches, leaving behind a legacy of passion, hard work, and camaraderie that touched many lives.

In recognition of his enduring contributions, the association will dedicate a plaque in his honor on the Fishing Industry Remembrance Wall in Karumba shortly after our Annual General Meeting on Friday, October 10, 2025.

Our deepest condolences go out to Nicola's family, friends, and fellow fishers. He will be greatly missed, but his spirit will continue to inspire us all.

Fisheries Queensland Update September 2025

It's been great to see a few wins for the commercial sector over the past few months, with the Queensland Government:

- launching Prosper 2025, the Department of Primary Industries blueprint for a financial sustainable primary industry sector, which includes commercial fishing – the government has ceased the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and will work with industry to develop a co-designed fishing and seafood action plan (see below)
- revoking the investment and increased effort warnings to promote further growth of the commercial fishing industry
- announcing plans to increase the east coast Spanish mackerel annual commercial catch and set a new biomass target to optimise harvest and ensure ongoing sustainable access to the fishery.

Consultation is now open on the proposed management changes for east coast Spanish mackerel and saucer scallops. Have your say at dpi.engagementhub.com.au. Submissions will close 5 pm, Wednesday 8 October 2025.

We recently held a consultation on options to implement independent onboard monitoring in Queensland trawl fisheries. Being able to demonstrate the sustainability of Queensland trawl fisheries is essential to maintain existing and obtain future access to domestic and international seafood markets. The Queensland Government will now consider all public feedback provided. Thank you to everyone who participated in this process.

Representatives of your association will also be invited to a Statewide Fishing and Seafood Forum in October to support the co-design of the 5-year Fishing and Seafood Action Plan, which will deliver on the vision and priorities of the Primary Industries Prosper 2050 blueprint that aims to boost primary production output to \$30 billion by 2030. We will be engaging with industry members across the sector. There will be a range of opportunities to provide your ideas and insights, with the final action plan released for public consultation late this year or early next year. Your input will help capture the diverse interests and priorities of our fishing and seafood sector.

Finally, I wanted to let you know that Eddie Jebreen will be coming on board as Acting Executive Director (Fisheries) for the next 6 months. Some of you may know Eddie from his previous life in Fisheries, and he has kindly agreed to take on this role while we undertake recruitment to fill the position.

I look forward to the outcomes of the next Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fishery working group meeting on 18–19 November.

Pauline Jacob
Deputy Director-General,
Fisheries and Forestry Department of Primary Industries



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Together, we'll navigate these challenges and ensure the Gulf of Carpentaria remains a thriving fishery for generations to come.