

Commercial fishing reforms come into play across South Australia



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 **FRESH DELIVERY:** Processing freshly caught King George whiting at KI Fresh Seafoods in Kingscote on Kangaroo Island. Photo: Stan Gorton

South Australia's much-anticipated \$24.5 million reform of the marine scalefish fishery officially went into effect on July 1.

The state government says changes will strengthen the long-term financial and ecological sustainability of the commercial fishing industry.

Changes include a trading system where fishers can exchange and bid for quotas to catch certain species, as well as new zones and other regulatory changes.

The changes have not come without some disruption, as the government bought out licence holders.

For example, as many as half of Kangaroo Island's commercial marine scale fishermen decided to surrender their licences.

Late last year, applications for nearly 130 commercial fishing licence surrenders had been received in the state government's reform of the marine scalefish fishery.

See: [Commercial fishing licence buyback hits Kangaroo Island industry](#)

The changes include the establishment of four fishing zones across the state, the adoption of a quota system for the priority species of snapper, King George whiting, southern garfish and southern calamari and a suite of measures to cut red tape.

Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development, David Basham said the state government's \$24.5 million marine scalefish fishery reform was vital for the future of the industry.

"From today the marine scalefish fishery has transitioned from a 'nanny state' regulation of how and when commercial fishers can ply their trade to a modern output-based fishery with annual catch limits set to ensure the sustainability of fish species for future years," Mr Basham said.

"Through our historic \$24.5 million reform we have introduced new measures to protect sustainability of species such as setting sustainable annual catch limits and allocated tradable quota units so fishers can better plan their operations to maximise returns.

"These changes mean much intrusive red tape historically imposed can be cut and we will continue to work with the industry to explore further options to reduce regulatory burdens.

"The marine scalefish fishery is iconic in South Australia and the popular species caught for seafood consumers include King George whiting, garfish, squid, snapper, tommy ruff, octopus, Australian salmon and snook.

"Reform can be challenging for the fishers and their communities, but this was requested by fishers and is required to ensure South Australia remains the 'Seafood State' with profitable seafood businesses into the future, supported by sustainable fish populations.

"Before our reform process there was simply too many fishers and not enough fish. The first part of our reform was a voluntary licence surrender program and to have 96 licences surrendered was a strong result.

"As of today, we now have a smaller but more profitable marine scale fishing fleet across South Australia."

The Marine Scalefish Quota Trading system - available via the myPIRSA portal is now available.

The system enables licence holders to advertise, buy and sell quota for permanent transfers and will be available until June 30, 2022.

Key reform changes

- Establishment of four fishing zones - West Coast, Spencer Gulf, Gulf St Vincent and Kangaroo Island, and South East
- Establishment of individual transferable quota (ITQ) management systems for King George whiting, snapper, southern garfish and southern calamari for the Marine Scalefish Fishery and the Rock Lobster Fisheries, managed by a total allowable commercial catch.
- Separation of the commercial taking of vongole and sardine from the Marine Scalefish Fishery and the constitution of the new fisheries under their own regulations.

Red tape reduction measures

- Allowing licence holders in the West Coast fishing zone to take up to 150 razorfish (for bait) over a three-day period.
- Adding a new commercial fishing gear type, a 'lift net'.
- Removal of the need to attend longlines
- Allowing nets and lines to be carried on board a fishing vessel and used at the same time.
- The removal of seasonal closures for snapper (in the South East) and southern garfish now that these stocks are managed under TACC and quota.
- The addition of several permitted species to the fishery, including: Conger Eel, Sergeant Baker, Silver Drummer, Weedy Whiting, Knifejaw, Rock and Spider Crab (West of 135 degrees East).
- Changes to the conditions of Fish Processors who are also Marine Scalefish Fishery licence holders to sell their catch to any type of business, instead of just restaurants, pubs and clubs.

- Marine Scalefish Fishery licence holders will still need to apply to become a fish processor under these conditions and will be exempt from paying any fees for 12 months.
- The removal of seven-day blocks for the use of general replacement master days.

For more information visit pir.sa.gov.au/fishingreform



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