



Christmas Island Fishing Rules FAQ

What are the current rules?

Western Australian (WA) fishing rules are already in place on Christmas Island (CI) and were not specifically designed for the unique CI region.

Why are we proposing to change the current rules?

It is important that the proposed new rules take into account the unique CI environment, community values, and cultural needs, while ensuring enough protection so fish stocks remain sustainable for current and future generations of CI residents.

What studies and research have taken place?

Studies undertaken by WA Fisheries began in 2007 and include underwater visual surveys, baited remote underwater video surveys, environmental surveys, biological sampling and catch composition, satellite receivers, and eDNA (environmental DNA obtained from samples). Studies have explored species composition, distribution and abundance and whether stocks rely on local recruitment or periodical recruitment from elsewhere. This information is used to make informed management decisions. As further information is collected and it is demonstrated that there is a change in fish stocks, the proposed new rules can be amended.

How will the proposed new rules compare to WA rules?

When compared to WA rules, the proposed new rules for CI are less restrictive. Bag limits would be per person, per day up to a total of 20 finfish (pelagic, demersal) and four rock lobster. The proposed CI rules are more generous than the current WA rules, for example:

Rule	WA (current)	CI (proposed)
Demersal species mixed bag limit	2 (West Coast)	16
Pelagic species mixed bag limit	3	4
Recreational fishing licences	5 categories	0
Size limits applied	Yes	No

Will I be able to spearfish?

Yes, however not with compressed air or breathing apparatus, or within Flying Fish Cove. This also supports community safety and mirrors Department of Transport rules.

Are there protections for crustaceans?

Yes, fish that are generally considered at higher risk (due to biology, history, movement or fishing pressure) will have a more precautionary daily bag limit, or be listed as totally protected. Reproducing crustaceans, including female crabs and female rock lobsters with eggs or spawn attached beneath their bodies, are totally protected.

Will these new rules be permanent?

No, we anticipate they will change over time. Community values, environmental conditions and fish stocks may change over time. With these changes, the management approach would need to adapt.

The primary focus remains that CI fish stocks are managed in a sustainable way for current and future generations of CI residents. The Australian Government and WA Fisheries strongly support community engagement and citizen science in evidence collection to support review of the rules and their effectiveness into the future.

Why are there limits proposed to what I can take off CI?

Due to CI's isolated and limited habitat, the fish stocks are in general, at higher risk of over-fishing. This is particularly the case for demersal reef fish that inhabit the fringing coral reef around CI. These fish rely on the resident population for juvenile recruitment. The focus of the fisheries management approach on CI is to ensure the sustainability of the stocks into the future for those that live on CI. To help achieve this goal, the proposed maximum quantity of fish that a person may possess in the area of CI Airport is five kilograms.

What community consultation occurred to develop and promote these rules?

After initial assessment of recreational fishing practices on CI, and species at risk of over-exploitation, WA Fisheries released a draft management strategy in 2007. Awareness of the strategy and management approach on CI was supported by further community meetings, shire meetings, public information sessions and the distribution of proposed recreational fishing guides. While consultations have been underway for some time, the Australian Government is committed to this further round of public consultation and will continue to listen and work with the community.

What if I have further questions?

Please contact WA Fisheries (part of the WA Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development) by emailing IndianOceanTerritories@dpird.wa.gov.au or the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Cities and Regional Development by emailing IndianOceanTerritories@infrastructure.gov.au