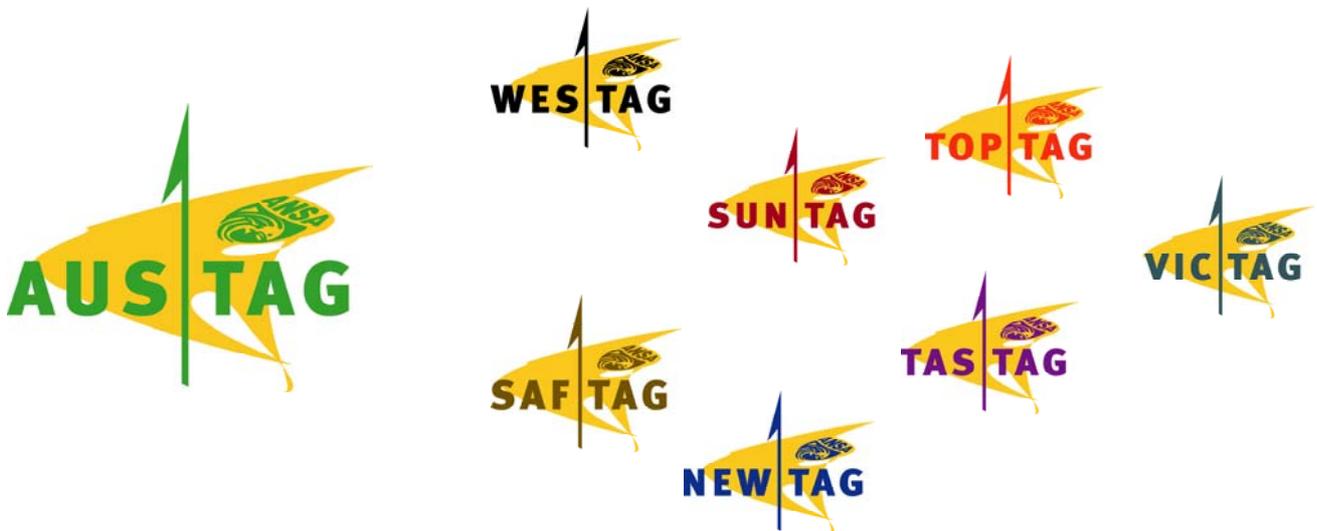




**AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION LTD**

# **AUSTAG SPORTFISH TAGGING REPORT 2000/2001**



**TAG AND RELEASE  
BUILDING ON CONSERVATION AND KNOWLEDGE**

# AUSTAG SPORTFISH TAGGING REPORT 2000/2001

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## Acknowledgments

The establishment and running of a national fish tagging program to collect basic data on our fish species is a major undertaking. The task is considerably greater and more difficult when that program is being set up by a recreational fishing organisation such as ANSA with most of the work being carried out voluntarily.

Without the efforts of a host of people that have contributed to the program and support from government and the corporate sector this would not have happened. It is important to acknowledge the efforts of those that have made this possible.

Firstly, the support of a number of State Government Fisheries agencies, Commonwealth Government programs and industry bodies is acknowledged, particularly those that have provided funding support to the various State Programs:

Natural Heritage Trust Fisheries Action Program  
Australian Fishing Tackle Association  
Department of Primary Industries (Queensland Fisheries Service)  
Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries in Tasmania  
Department of Recreation and Sport South Australia  
Department of Natural Resources and Environment in Victoria  
Western Australia Fisheries Department  
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation



Support of the corporate sector and recreational fishing industry bodies is also acknowledged:

### Austag

Australian Fishing Tackle Association  
Zephyr Business Services

Platypus Fishing Lines  
InfoFish Services



### Suntag - Queensland

Platypus Fishing Lines  
InfoFish Services  
Henderson Handcrafts  
Dawson Catchment Coordinating Assoc

Lively Lures  
Sunfish Queensland  
ANSA Qld Clubs



Contributions were also made from the following ANSA Clubs, Community Groups and Individuals

Burdekin Recreational Sportfishing Club	Michael Dohnt
Cardwell Sportfishing Club	Maryborough Sportfishing Club
Mission Beach Game Fishing Club	Rainbow Beach Fishing Charters
Townsville City Council	Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association

## Westag - Western Australia

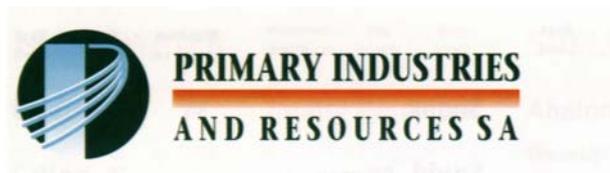
Fisheries Research and Development Corporation  
Shimano  
Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee

Platypus Fishing Lines  
Western Angler magazine



## Saftag - South Australia

Department of Recreation and Sport  
South Australian Research and Development Institute  
Department of Primary Industries and Resources South Australia



*Newtag and Catch and Release - New South Wales*

Kwik Kopy Printing  
Lafarge Plasterboard

Mustad Hooks



**Mustad<sup>®</sup>**



*Victag - Victoria*

Natural Heritage Trust Fisheries Action Program  
Marine and Freshwater Resources Institute



## How to Contact Austag Programs

Austag can be found on the ANSA web site at [www.ansa.com.au](http://www.ansa.com.au)

### Austag and Suntag Coordinator

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## *Austag Summary 2000/2001*



Austag is now in its second year as a fully national program and is the only such program managed by a recreational fishing organisation.

Programs in each State are Newtag in New South Wales, Tastag in Tasmania, Victag in Victoria, Westag in Western Australia, Toptag in the Northern Territory, Suntag in Queensland and Saftag in South Australia. A new family of logos was adopted this year.

Austag was established in 1994 initially as a fish tagging program. In 96/97 the collection of catch and effort data by ANSA members was added and NSW and Queensland have included the collection of this data in their programs.

***At the end of 2000/2001 Austag has achieved over 300,000 fish tagged around Australia for over 24,000 recaptures.***

- ☑ Saftag in South Australia commenced in 1997/98 and this is its 4<sup>th</sup> year. After a slow start a total of 910 fish have now been tagged with 39 recaptures (4.3%).
- ☑ Newtag in New South Wales commenced in 1999/00 however is still going through the process of obtaining approval to tag from the NSW Department of Agriculture Animal Care and Ethics Committee.
- ☑ Westag commenced in 1996/97 and this was its 4<sup>th</sup> year. A total of 3,471 fish have been tagged with 173 (5.0%) recaptures to date. Fish tagged in 2000/01 were 1,576 with 86 recaptures.
- ☑ Tastag commenced in 1995/96 and this is its 6<sup>th</sup> year. It has now reached a total of around 1,500 fish tagged and 30 recaptures. Total number of fish tagged in 2000/01 was only 20 however new funding is likely to boost Tastag activities significantly.
- ☑ Toptag commenced in 1994/95 and this was its 7<sup>th</sup> year. A total of 3,538 fish have been tagged with 195 (5.5%) recaptures. Fish tagged in 2000/01 were 331 with 33 recaptures
- ☑ Victag commenced in 1993/94 and this was its 8<sup>th</sup> year. It has now reached a total of 30,984 fish tagged and 841 (2.7%) recaptures. Total fish tagged in 2000/01 was 4,695 with 175 recaptures.
- ☑ Suntag in Queensland has been operating since 1986/87 and this was its 15<sup>th</sup> year. Total fish tagged are now 266,968 with 22,924 (8.6%) recaptures. Fish tagged in 2000/01 were 28,213 with 2,331 recaptures.
- ☑ The NSW Catch and Release program shows that 16% of fish caught by ANSA members were kept. In 2000/01 it took an average of 24 minutes fishing time to catch a fish and 2.8 hours to catch a keeper.
- ☑ In Suntag a total of 4,532 trips have now been recorded from 1996/97 to 2000/01 with 49,826 fish caught for 40,291 hours of effort. The average Suntag fishing trip is 5.1 hours in duration and involves 1.7 fishers. On each trip there is an average of 9.4 fish caught of which 0.95 (or 1) fish are kept. Suntag fishers keep 10.1% of their catch overall.

## 1. Introduction

For the past decade ANSA has been struggling to maintain its relevance and appeal with fishers out there in the real world. Membership has remained static or fallen in national terms. Greater choice in society, longer – not shorter working hours, instant everything and convenience, greater complexity in running organisations, increased pressures on the environment and fish stocks have all had their impacts on ANSA as well as many other voluntary organisations in our society. Many have wilted under those pressures and disappeared, many have gone along ignoring those influences and have gradually lost support and become irrelevant. Some have gone through a sometimes painful rebirth process and have emerged stronger and more relevant.

I believe that ANSA is in the latter group although the rebirth process is far from complete. But it has now reached the point where we are likely to reap some of the benefits of going through the pain.

What are some of the things that have or are changing that will bring that about? And what does all this mean in terms of Austag?

ANSA has decided to take a business-like approach to running the organisation. This is demonstrated by the conversion of ANSA from a national committee to a company with a board of directors. The development of a Business Plan, adoption of a Quality Management System, the move to a paid executive officer (at least part time) and the desire to provide a service to every single member of ANSA are the things that have or are about to be changed.

The other change is the introduction of individual membership. ANSA has traditionally been an association of club members but now we are offering those who do not wish to join a club the opportunity to be members of the organisation. We are still struggling to come to grips with how we manage this as it is all new to us. To help us we are establishing a national membership register that will for the first time identify and allow us to service all members.

The role of Austag in all this? Well if we are listening to our members and potential members many will tell us of their concerns for fish stocks and what they would like to do as individuals. They want to better understand what is happening to our fish and they want to be personally involved. Many of them want to be part of our Austag programs. This is an area of ANSA that is growing rapidly.

Our work in Austag has opened up tremendous opportunities for a greater involvement in research and education. We have recently been given an opportunity to play a leading role in a National Strategy for the Survival of Released Line Caught Fish and our Westag program is already involved in one such project on the survival of west coast reef fish.

The future for ANSA is whatever we want to make it provided we are seen by both our membership and external groups as an organisation that is relevant to recreational fishing.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Sawynok", with a stylized, cursive flourish at the end.

Bill Sawynok  
Austag Coordinator

## 2. What is AUSTAG?

Austag is an umbrella program that coordinates the collection of tagging and catch and effort by ANSA members throughout Australia. It provides the framework and standards for the management and operation of separate programs in each State as outlined in figure 1.

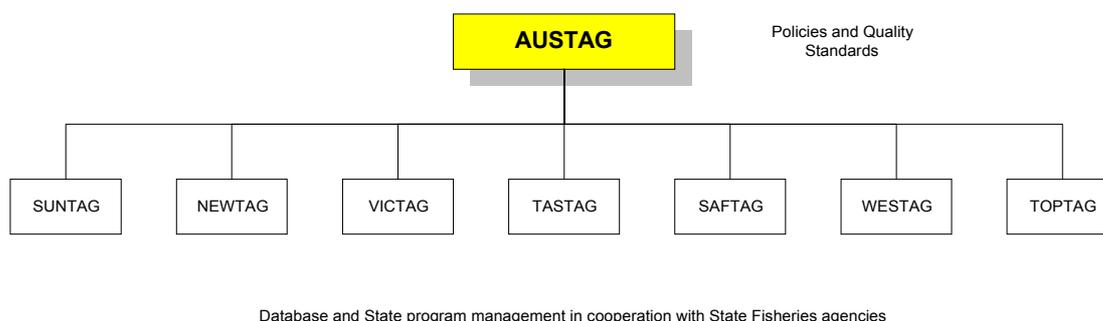


Figure 1: Relationship between Austag and the State Tagging programs

A Quality Management System approach has been adopted by ANSA. This includes the development of an Austag Manual to cover the operations of all State programs. The Austag Manual was approved by the ANSA Board in 2000/01.

The State programs under Austag are where the data are collected and stored. As the database in use around Australia is the same, data can be readily assembled and analysed on an Australia wide basis. While the State programs conform to the national standards they are managed and operate independently and State Tagging Coordinators are responsible for the collection, storage and dissemination of tagging and catch and effort data in their own States.

The Austag Coordinator is responsible for the setting and maintenance of overall standards within which the State programs operate, providing support and guidance to the State programs and developing and refining operational aspects of data collection.

As part of its commitment to ensuring the sustainability of our fishery resources ANSA has established the ANSA Fisheries Research Foundation, its associated Trust Fund and Scientific Reference Committee.

The Foundation Trust Fund has received recognition from CSIRO and the Australian Tax Office in terms of Section 73A of the Income Tax Assessment Act. This means that contributions over \$2 to the Foundation Trust Fund are tax deductible.

As part of the operation of the Trust Fund a Scientific Reference Committee has been established. The role of the committee is to allocate funds to research projects to be undertaken on behalf of the Foundation. At this stage no funds have been expended from the Trust Fund.

The Scientific Reference Committee is comprised of prominent scientists in the fisheries research area. The members are:

- Dr Patrick Coutin – Marine and Freshwater Research Institute in Victoria
- Mike Cappo – Australian Institute of Marine Science in Queensland
- Dr Julian Pepperell – Pepperell Research in Queensland

### 3. Austag Funding

Most Austag funding is received direct by the State Tagging programs and Austag itself received only corporate support in the past year.

A breakdown of funding for each of the State programs is not available however funding was provided by State Fisheries agencies, the Natural Heritage Trust Fisheries Action Program, Australian Fishing Tackle Association and Club contributions in Queensland.

The corporate sector continues to be a strong supporter of Austag and the support of these recreational fishing industry businesses is welcome.

This year the Australian Fishing Tackle Association (AFTA) continues its sponsorship of Austag Tag and Recapture Certificates.

## *4. Status of Austag and State Programs*

Austag was established in February 1995 and at that time State Program's existed in Queensland and Victoria. Since then programs have been established in all States.

Newtag was established in NSW in 1999/00 and incorporates the ANSA NSW Catch and Release program. ANSA NSW is also involved in the Gamefish Tagging Program, which is managed by NSW Fisheries. Stan Konstantaras is the Newtag Coordinator.

Suntag was established in Queensland in the late 1970's and the management of this program was taken over by ANSA Qld in 1987. Until recently this was known as the Sportfish Tagging Program. Bill Sawynok has been the coordinator since 1987. This program is now managed by InfoFish Services on behalf of ANSA Qld and employs the equivalent of 1.3 full time staff.

Victag was established in Victoria in 1993/94 and for the past 4 years Tony Jones from Portland has been the Victag coordinator. This year Brian Hayes and Annette and Adrian Slater have joined Tony to carry out data entry.

Toptag was established in the Northern Territory in 1994/95 with Dave Woodburn as coordinator and he has held that position since that time.

Tastag was established in Tasmania in 1994/95 with Tony Cowgill as coordinator for the past 3 years.

Westag was established in Western Australia in 1995/96 with Jamie Waite from Kalbarri as the coordinator for the past 2 years.

Each State Tagging Coordinator has provided a separate report on the operation of the program in their State.

### *4.1 Use of Austag Data*

Most State Program's are still in their early phase of data collection and there has not been sufficient data collected to be used in any scientific analysis. However where available data is now substantial, such as in Suntag and Victag data has been used in a wide range of projects.

Data from Westag are being used as part of a Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) funded project into the survival of released reef fish.

Data from Suntag in Queensland are extensive and have been or are being used in several projects over the past year. Details are contained in the Suntag report.

## *4.2 Support for Research*

Currently Austag programs are providing support to a number of research projects and data collection projects around Australia. That Austag programs are providing this support is a measure of the regard that it is gaining from researchers and the community.

In Queensland Suntag is collecting tagging and recapture data in conjunction with the Agency for Food and Fibre Science (AFFS) on Tailor as part of an age validation project and on Mangrove Jack as part of a study of their biology. Both these projects have received funding from the FRDC. It is also working with a post graduate student from Queensland University on tagging of sharks in the Brisbane River. A new project looking at fish movement through a fishway on the Macintyre River at Goondiwindi is being undertaken with AFFS.

It also assisted in the collection of tagged mud crab data in Weipa for the local Catchment Coordinating Committee and is currently assisting in a mud crab tagging project in the Barron River being undertaken by the Holloways Beach Environmental Education Centre. It is also working with the Dawson Catchment Coordination Association on a tagging project involving Golden Perch and Southern Saratoga in the Dawson River.

In Victoria Victag is working with the Marine and Freshwater Institute on Snapper and Bream.

In Western Australia Westag is collecting tagging data in conjunction with WA Fisheries on a fish survival project on reef species. This project has also received funding from FRDC.

In Tasmania Tastag is collecting recapture data on Southern Rock Lobsters for CSIRO.

## *5. Tags Equipment and Recapture Certificates*

Tags, applicators to apply the tags, and ancillary equipment are the specialised requirements of tagging and account for much of the expenditure on the program.

### *5.1 Tags*

Two types of tags are used throughout Austag programs. These are the dart or spear tag and the anchor or gun tag. Both these tags are used in a number of sizes. All tags used in the program are obtained from Hallprint Pty Ltd of South Australia and the support and cooperation of Michael Hall is acknowledged.

### *5.2 Tagging Equipment*

Tagging equipment for use by taggers is available as part of the range of ANSA products that can be obtained from Sawara Services. See How to Contact Austag Programs for contact details. A brochure is available that outlines the equipment available and the cost. All tagging

equipment sold through the Sawara Services meets the minimum Austag standards. Figures 2 and 3 show the main equipment currently in use.

The range of tagging equipment that is now available includes:

- Dart tag applicator
- Tag gun
- Dart tag kits (Roll Out or Wallet)
- Tag booklet
- Tag ruler (fold up)



Figure 2: Standard tagging equipment and tags in use by Austag taggers



Figure 3: Roll Up Tag Kit and Fold Up Measurer in use by Austag taggers

### 5.3 Tag and Recapture Certificates

A very important consideration in Austag is to provide feedback to fishers involved. One of the key ways that is done is through providing a Tag and Recapture Certificate that records the full history of a recaptured fish including all recaptures if it has been recaptured more than once. In all Austag programs a certificate is provided to both the person that recaptured the fish and the tagger as shown in figure 4.



Figure 4: Austag certificate used to provide feedback on recaptured fish

## 6. Saftag – South Australia



2000/2001 was the first year of the new millennium, which ever way we look at it, and as such will be seen as the beginning of many things.

For Saftag it has marked the beginning of the construction of a database of useful information that will assist us (ANSA and ANSA SA) in producing hard evidence for a multitude of uses in the 21st century.

As the database grows, we believe, that we will be able to provide real data to support or decry theories about fish in general and sportfishing in particular. These theories will gradually be tossed aside or established as fact and decisions ensuring the survival and sustainability of our local fish resources will be made, based on facts rather than guesswork.

That sounds wonderful but in reality we still have a long way to go.

At fiscal year end we've placed 910 tags for 39 returns.

To date we've learnt a lot. We expect to learn much more.

We've learnt that our return rate is increasing. At just over 4% we've seen an increase over last year's 3%. We expect this is due to a larger number of longer term fish coming back for a another bite.

We've learnt that although tagging effort only drops marginally during the winter, recapture rates drop off during those colder months. That suggests to us that the ANSA taggers fish more regularly than our non-ANSA counterparts.

We've learnt that South Australian fish do not (in the short term) move around a lot. Our returns, so far indicate that most fish are content to hang about the same place for at least several months. We've recorded a few shorter movements but so far nothing that we'd class as a major migration. Our Victorian counterparts (thanks fellas) have provided some return data for Victorian Snapper that were recaptured just over our border. These fish traveled quite long distances to visit sunny SA but it appears that they didn't enjoy our waters enough to really move in. If we shifted the border 30km or so the fish would still be Victorians.

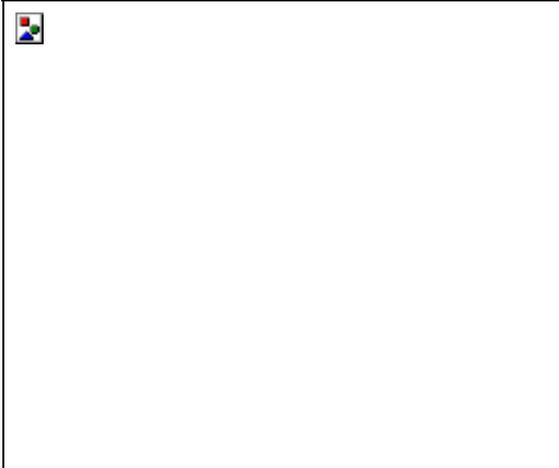
We've learnt, for ourselves, that multiple recaptures are possible after having our first triple recorded. Our first was a 700mm Snapper that was caught three times over a period of about 5 weeks.

We've learnt that tagging is costly. Our current figures contain a large component that relates to setup costs. The fact remains, however, that it has to date cost us over \$4.00 to tag a fish and over \$100.00 per recapture. The figures do not allow for any costs incurred by the anglers



involved, who do so entirely at their own expense. Naturally, these figures are reducing, slightly, as our numbers increase.

We've also learnt, unfortunately, that involving groups outside of ANSA can be troublesome and perhaps somewhat less reliable than ANSA would expect. Last year we reported on two subprograms. The WC program, aimed at exploring Mulloway on our West Coast, has produced 2 recaptures but insufficient supporting information to even guess at what those recaptures represent. Having said that, we must still thank the anglers that took part and released fish with tags in them. The PL program involved tagging Southern Bluefin Tuna around Port Lincoln. Unfortunately, this well-intentioned program has resulted in minimal actual tagging and zero recaptures.



We expect to learn a lot more, next year and into the future.

We hope to learn a little about released fish survival rates as we provide data into a current scientific study into exactly that.

We hope to learn more about where and if our main sporting species travel to, and perhaps from that, learn why.

We hope to learn why Mulloway seem to be recaptured far more regularly than smaller fish such as Whiting.

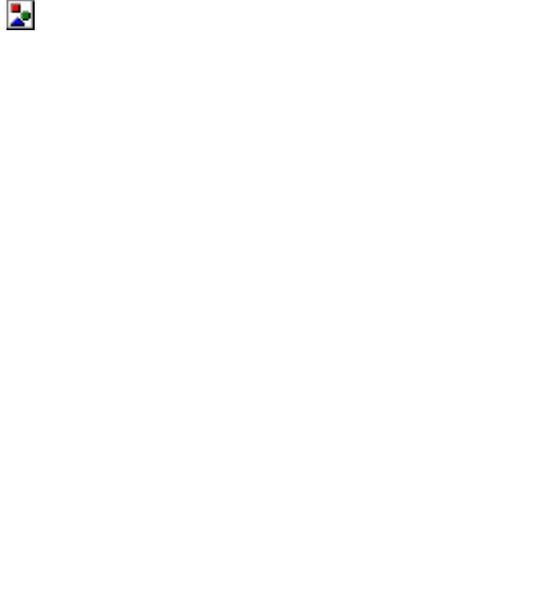
We hope to learn exactly how many distinct populations exist for our Snapper and Mulloway and whether these interact with those interstate.

We hope to learn what percentages of catches are seasonal and whether that correlates to spawning periods.

And we hope to learn a whole bunch of things that we haven't even thought about yet.

For those of us that enjoy statistics and the like we provide a little number-crunching entertainment below.

On a final note, thanks to all our assistants.



To the anglers that are tagging, whether you've tagged a few or a few hundred, it all helps. Thank you.

To the anglers reporting recaptures, it would be a waste of time without you. Thank you.

To those helping to raise awareness or funds. Every word you speak helps too. Thank you.

To ANSA and SARDI. We're also enjoying the process and you guys made it possible. Thank you.

Marcel Vandergoot Saftag Coordinator

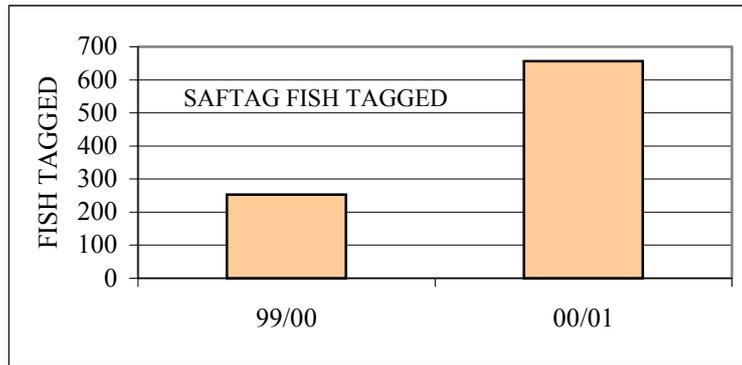


Figure 5: Saftag fish tagged each year

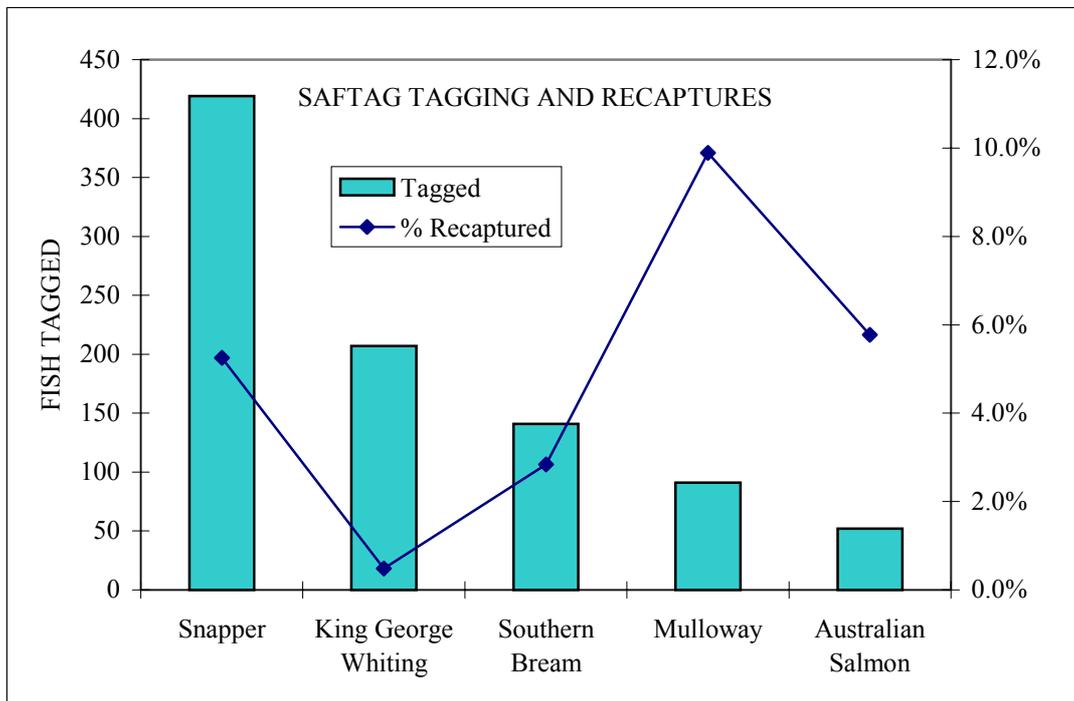


Figure 6: Saftag fish tagged by species and recaptures



Figure 7: A Saftag tagged Bream

Top Taggers	Fish tagged	Number recaptured
Alan Hall	242	11
Marcel Vandergoot	162	6
Knut Gassmanis	147	7
Brad Heath	117	2
Olliver Fish	71	1

Top Fish	Length	Tagger
Southern Bream	395 mm	Brad Heath
Mulloway	1150 mm	Steve Schinckel
Australian Salmon	730 mm	Marcel Vandergoot
Snapper	1035 mm	Alan Hall
King George Whiting	450 mm	George Apat

Figure 8:

statistics

Saftag tagger

## 7. Newtag and Catch and Release - New South Wales



### 7.1 Newtag

I would have been thrilled to have an opening paragraph that stated “2000/2001 has marked the commencement of serious sportfish tagging in New South Wales”, similar to what Marcel opened with in last year’s Saftag component of the Austag report. The long, protracted campaign to establish sportfish tagging in NSW has a few more hurdles to overcome but these will be overcome and Newtag will be a reality.

In order for my fellow tagging officers to understand the tribulations we are having (how I envy the states with healthy relationships with their Fisheries) I will outline the process Newtag was involved in over the last year. Some might look at the following and say so what, some will say you should have done it this way, some will have a little sympathy for the NSW Branch, but at least everyone will be up to date and informed.

Last year I made mention of the fact that Newtag was involved in the inaugural Bream 2000 catch and release competition, where Newtag was invited to tag the bream that were coming in to be measured and released. It was to be Newtag’s first foray into sportfish tagging. NSW Fisheries was also invited. The tagging was completed, the event a huge success and we were then told that we had broken the law in NSW. It seems that even though NSW Fisheries knew months in advance that we were going to tag these fish, the Animal Care and Ethics Committee attached to NSW Fisheries was informed after the event of our actions. The ANSA NSW Secretary, Promotions Officer and Tagging Officer were liable for \$2000 fines or 1 year in jail for acts of cruelty to animals and unauthorised research.

That prompted me to contact the Animal Care and Ethics Committee attached to NSW Fisheries and the NSW Department of Agriculture and admit our liability and guilt in tagging these fish. A process of negotiations began with both bodies to see which one was best suited to oversee our type of programs. Once you receive approval to conduct research, an Animal Care and Ethics Committee must oversee all research work that occurs within NSW. Thousands of dollars have been spent on correspondence, emails, phone calls and set up costs, hundreds of hours have been spent on my behalf and the results to date have been limited.

Inroads have been made with the Director General's Animal Care and Ethics Committee attached to NSW Agriculture, which is currently assessing our application. Without this approval you cannot commence any form of research in NSW on animals. We hope to have Newtag operational and the Director General's Animal Care and Ethics Committee overseeing our projects. These projects would involve NSW Fisheries researchers, but not their Animal Care and Ethics Committee, who made it quite clear that they do not want to be involved, testament to the last correspondence I had with them which read, "Our NSW Fisheries ACEC is very dubious about the scientific merit of tagging fish. They repeatedly question the ethics and scientific merit of all our research that does involve tagging and I must tell you that there was a great deal of opposition to the idea of approving tagging by recreational anglers from ANSA at all." NSW Fisheries ACEC even opposes tagging of gamefish.



Figure 9: Tagged Marlin ready for release

A few people within NSW Fisheries have told me that the decision is political, and our decision not to back the introduction of a fishing licence in NSW has cost us dearly. We stand by our decision and the models presented last year and the sort of licence we have today are like chalk and cheese, so ours and other major recreational fishing groups opposition was justified. The paper shuffle continues, with references, referees and a signed letter from God needed, but we are a persistent lot here in NSW and hopefully on the brink of a breakthrough.

## 7.2 *Tagging Projects*

The tagging projects we are developing involve **Australian Bass, Snapper, Mulloway, Flathead, Bream, Tailor and Australian Salmon**. We also have our Gamefish Tagging Program that includes **Albacore, Amberjack, Broadbill, Bonito, Cobia, Mahi Mahi, all Marlin, all Mackerel, Sailfish, Sampson Fish, most Sharks, all Tuna, Wahoo and Kingfish**. In NSW we have a wide variety of fish to tag, it's just that we lack a sportfish component.

- The Australian Bass would be tagged as part of a study to assess the effectiveness of fishways, that we are currently spending millions of dollars on modifying. Fishways in dams, removal of weirs, removal of flood gates are all positives, but without the data to gauge their effectiveness how will we ever know if they are working. NSW Fisheries researchers have indicated a willingness to cooperate on this project, once we get the authority to conduct the research.
- The Tailor and Salmon programs would dovetail into ANSA NSW push and success to have these fish declared recreational only species. We need the data to protect the migratory routes and spawning aggregations of these species. This will also assist other states in bringing some pressure to bear on their Fisheries managers, as fish have no borders or boundaries.
- The Snapper, Mulloway, Flathead and Bream species have significant research priorities attached to them. The first being Newtag involvement in the FRDC project on increased survival of fish after release and our involvement in any research that includes tagging, and the significance these species have in our plans to introduce Recreational Fishing Areas in NSW. With the process well underway, Recreational Fishing Areas are a reality in NSW. Botany Bay and Lake Macquarie have just been announced as RFA's another 20 or 30 bays, rivers, inlets and estuaries will be announced before the end of the year and with up to 70 of the 120 river, estuaries and bays that currently have no commercial interest are being closed to commercial activity, we need to accumulate some data that will determine migratory routes and spawning aggregations to enable us to set up buffer zones around these recreational fishing areas, that will have significant economic value to the community. These species are our trophy fish in NSW and more research is needed.

In conclusion I will honestly say that I thought we would be up and running by this time, and I have been at the coalface for too many years to walk away without any success, a more stubborn individual NSW Fisheries has yet to meet, so the commitment from NSW ANSA and myself is still there. We will acquire the hard data we need one way or another. I will say that one of the positives I received from the Directors General's Animal Care and Ethics Committee when they were assessing my initial application was the response we gave to one of the questions in their application form;

What happens to the animal once the research is complete? **It Lives.**

### 7.3 Catch and Release

You know you are doing something right when someone within a fisheries department tells you stop doing the Catch and Release study because the figures reflect badly on them. 5 years into the program, 5 years of hard data and a core of ANSA anglers who I rely upon to pass on the information has ensured that ANSA NSW has data on how effective our members are at catching and harvesting fish. The whole genre of catch and release is changing, with words

like harvesting replacing killing, increased survival and correct handling of our surplus harvest is now the politically correct way to say catch and release.

Figure 10 shows the total percentage of fish kept over the last 5 years. The 2000-2001 season saw us keep 16% of our catch. We returned the rest for being undersized or unwanted. In fact 68% of all fish we caught were undersized. Do these figures seem applicable to your type of fishing activity?

The fact we only kept 16% of our catch in 2001 fits in with our previous data and is very close to our average rate of 17.4%. We must have other factors that influence us to go fishing like camaraderie and getting some exercise and fresh air because the figures indicate that we do not go out and massacre schools of fish, and our primitive hunter-gatherer instincts are being eroded. A fish is definitely a bonus. Our time taken to catch a fish has decreased to 24 minutes, (figure 11) so either we are seeing a resurgence of fish stocks or getting smarter as anglers, or even picking and choosing our fishing times better.

A good way to have a break in the solitude every 24 minutes in 2000 –2001 was to catch a fish! We are also catching a keeper fish every 2.8 hours (figure 12), so once again we are either getting smarter as anglers or our stocks are making a comeback.

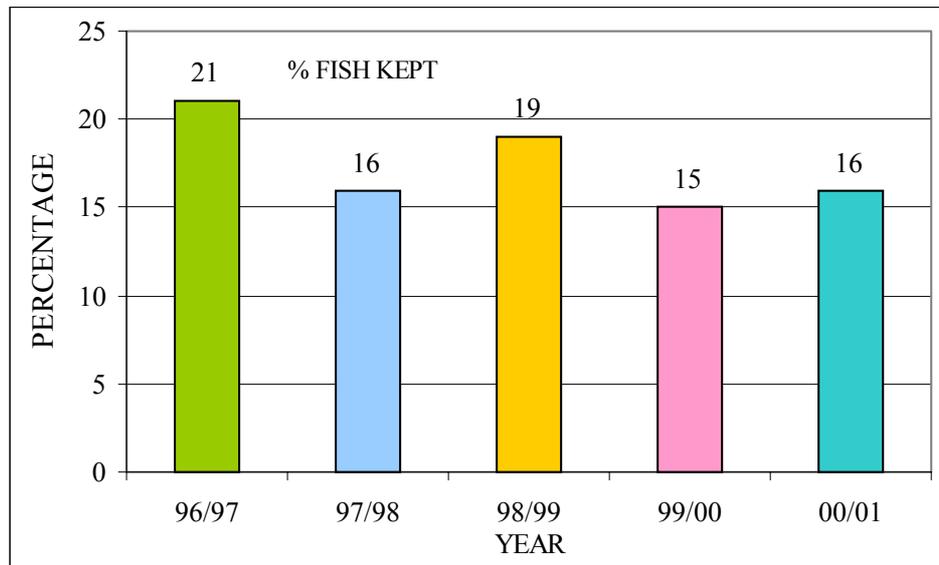


Figure 10: Percentage of fish kept of total catch by ANSA NSW members 1996/2001

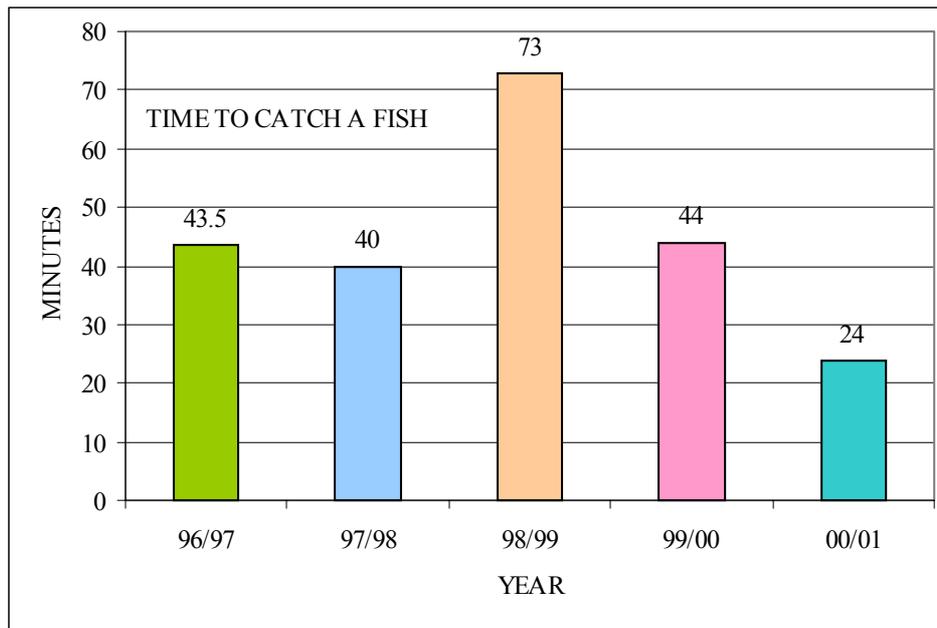


Figure 11: Time taken to catch a fish of any size by ANSA NSW members 1996/2001

Which ever way you analyze the data, in the 2000-2001 season we are catching more fish in less time, in fact 24 minutes to catch a fish as opposed to 73 minutes in 1998-1999, we are catching a fish of legal size every 2.8 hours, in contrast to 4.4 hours in 1997-1998, but we are keeping and taking home only 16% of our catch, unlike 1996-1997 which saw us take 21%. Last report I spoke on GPS upgraded to military precision and other factors that influenced our increased catch rates, but on the flipside it could also be a number of factors we rarely think about or apply to these types of results.

Increased GPS precision, ANSA NSW anglers becoming more skillful, ANSA NSW anglers becoming more in tune with the tides and moon phases, technology and the list goes on may contribute to our increased catch rates, but we rarely think of the following factors:

- *Increased competitiveness for food amongst our fish.* The target of baitfish as pet food and for the overseas markets means that maybe that pilchard impaled on 2 6/0 hooks and a length of mono is the only morsel of food a fish will in a day and throw caution into the wind.
- *Habitat degradation.* With trawlers and recreational anglers impacting on sea grass beds and urban development eating up the mangroves, the traditional forage grounds are disappearing. The mangroves and nursery areas are vanishing and the smaller juvenile stocks are inhabiting new grounds that they previously progressed to as they matured.

Maybe the fish stocks are really on the increase, let's hope so and only time and solid data will unravel the puzzle.

Stan Konstantaras  
Newtag

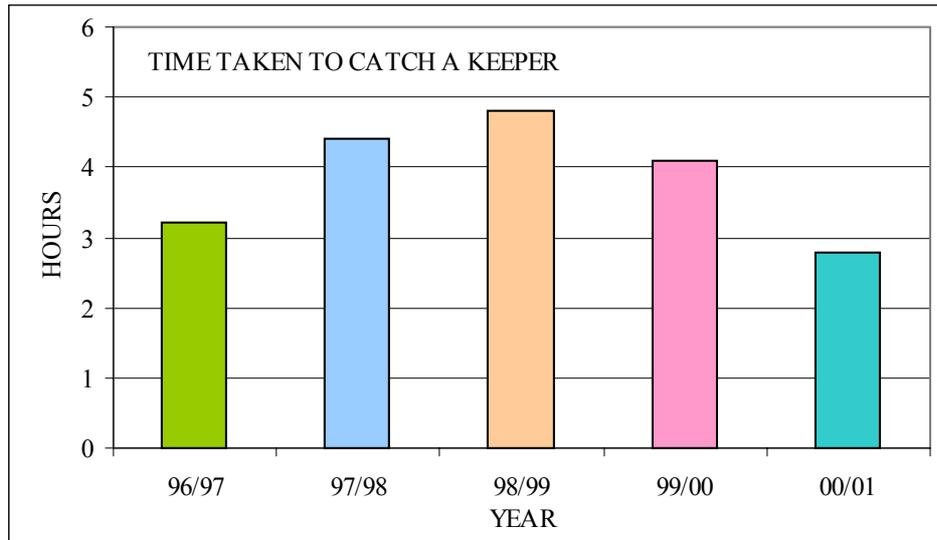


Figure 12: Time taken to catch a keeper by ANSA members

## 8. Westag – Western Australia



### 8.1 Introduction

2000-2001 opened with the welcome news of a new funding grant through FRDC. Fisheries WA will be assessing the hook mortality rate of the 4 major recreational species and Westag will be right in the forefront.

Apart from the research angle, education, and awareness is a major component and this over the next five years will be seriously addressed.

### 8.2 Media Publicity

The 2000-2001 season has seen Westag receive exceptional media coverage regarding the program. The **West Australian** newspaper journalist Mike Roenfelt has been supporting Westag since it's inception and continues to support ANSA by printing any recaptures that may occur.

Western Australia premier fishing magazine **Western Angler** has also been a major contributor to ANSA and the Westag program for many years. Ian Stagles, Ross Cusack and staff have been generous in providing advertising space and generous donations.

**National magazines** have also been long time supporters of ANSA in a national sense, and have also helped Westag with publicity on the release device. **NZ Fishing News** has also assisted with articles on the release weight.

**ABC radio 720** has a Saturday morning fishing program with Recfish West Executive Director Frank Prokop as host. Frank is an active participant in Westag so the organisation and the tagging receive copious amounts of exposure receiving plenty of interest.

**882 6PR** also have a weekly fishing show hosted on Friday nights hosted by Mike Roenfeldt and Ian Stagles and Mike Thompson of channel 9 providing plenty exposure.

Local TV station **ACCESS 31** has a fishing show **Tight Lines** hosted by well known fishing identities Garry Shugg and Bob Slight. These guys are also active participants in the Westag program giving us much needed TV exposure.

**Channel 9** program “Just Add Water” has also expressed keen interest in a major feature on Westag.

Thank must go to the following, without who’s support much of the resulting information would not be available:

- Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC).
- Lou and Erin Rummer - WA Bait Supplies
- Chris Scobles - Seaducer Tackle
- Frank Prokop – Recfishwest
- Ian Stagles – Western Angler
- Mike Roenfeldt – West Australian Newspapers
- Garry Shugg – Complete Fisherman Nedlands

### 8.3 Release Device

The WESTAG program took on a new phase with the funding from FRDC requiring a close look at release of 4 major demersal species in WA. Snapper, Dhufish, Baldchin Groper and Breaksea Cod are being put under the microscope. This led to a very simple Release Device being developed as shown in figure 14. Garry Lilley had one of his bursts of genius and reversed the function of a fish hook. Set into a weight and removing the barb enables the unit to be set into the top lip of the fish, and the fish to be returned to the depths and escape without the effort of fighting its own way down. This form of release will be monitored over the next 3 years in conjunction with Fisheries WA and be compared with other forms of release.

Stephen Gilders , Garry Lilley and Neil Daws  
Westag

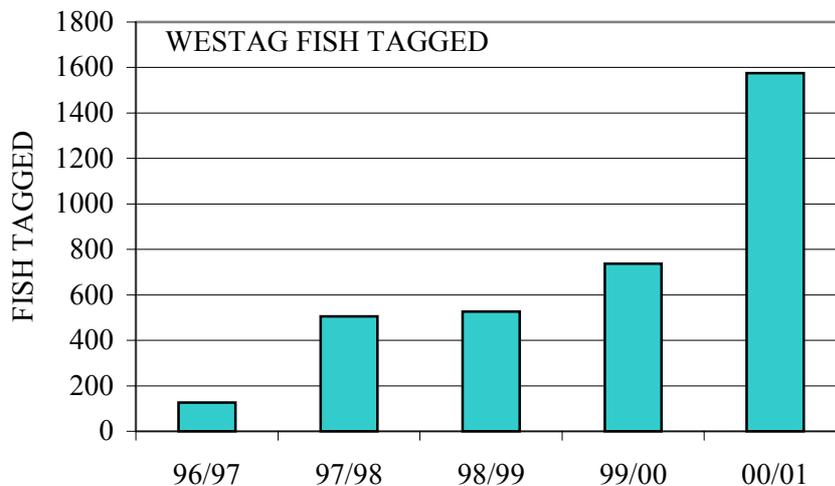


Figure 13: Fish tagged each year in Westag



Figure 14: Early version of the release device being used to get a baldchin grouper to the bottom

#### 8.4 *Maximising the Survival of West Coast Demersal Reef Fish A Focus on Dhufies*

Initially ANSAWA commenced tagging West Australian dhufish (*Glaucosoma hebracium*) in 1996. Since then the tag rate of dhufish and other species has escalated with increased interest and concern shown by ANSA members and the general public.

In June 2000 the Federal Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) funded a research project with ANSAWA and the Department of Fisheries - Western Australia, to investigate factors affecting the survival of released demersal reef fish, particularly dhufish, pink snapper, baldchin groper and breaksea cod. These factors include depth at capture, the use of different hook types and different release methods (venting and shotline).

Since 1996 there have been a total of 438 dhufish tagged and of these 40 have been recaptured and a further 2 have been recaptured twice. This represents a recapture rate of 9.1%, which is relatively high for such programs. Most dhufish fish are being caught from the same location in which they were originally tagged. The greatest period at liberty for any individual has been 989 days or about 2 years and 9 months and during this time the fish grew from 420 mm to 640 mm. The shortest time out was a reported recapture just 14 days after initial release and the average period of all recaptured dhufish is 408 days. Dhufish have been tagged at depths ranging from 10 metres through to 65 metres with the deepest recapture to date coming out of 48 metres and a further 6 fish being recaptured out of 40 to 46 metres.

## Depths of Tagged and Recaptured Dhufish since 1996

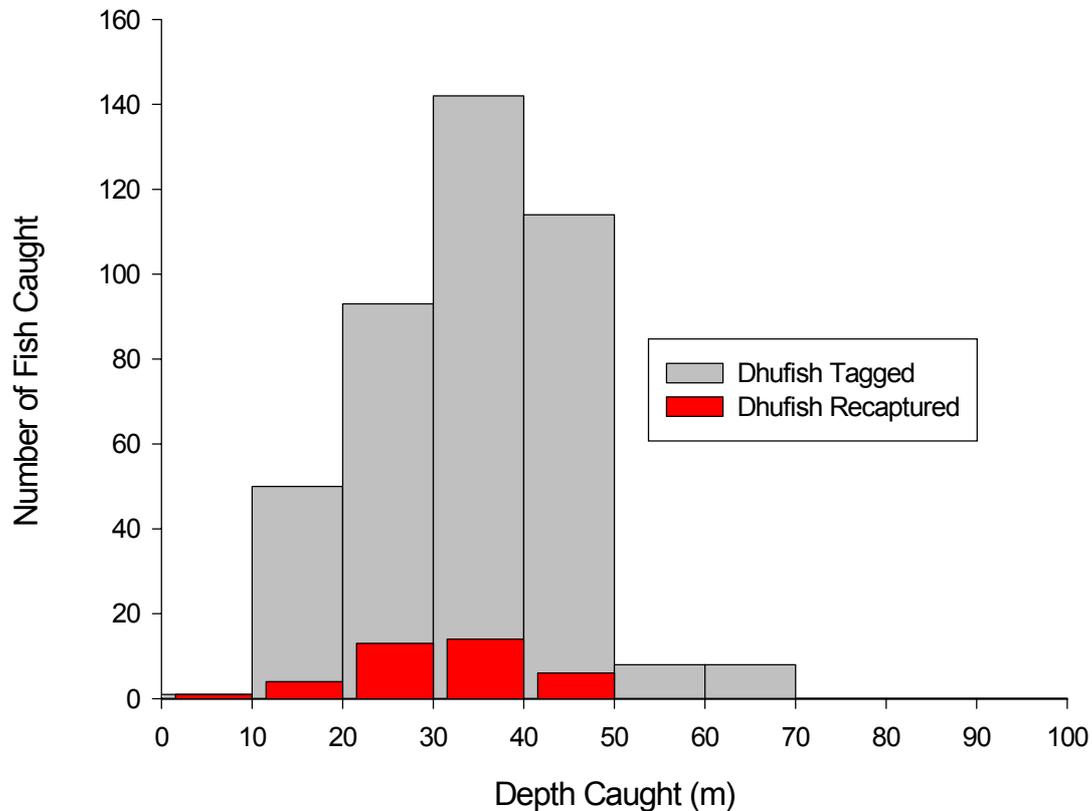


Figure 15: Summary of depths at which dhufish have been tagged and recaptured

With 3,000 dhufish intended to be tagged over the next few years, a better understanding of the effect of release techniques on the survival of dhufish and other demersal fish species will emerge.

Clinton Syers  
Fisheries WA

## 9. Top Tag – Northern Territory



A total of 3538 fish have been tagged to 30/6/2001, with 331 tagged in 2000/2001. 33 recaptures were reported during the year.

Three mackerel tagging trips were organised during the year with only one producing tagged fish due to rough weather wiping out off shore fishing. One Spanish Mackerel was recaptured by a charter boat and had been at large for 12 months, was recaptured 25 km east of its original capture area. It grew from 1140 to 1300mm, which is an average of 0.44mm a day.

Golden Snapper or Fingermark continue to be well represented in recaptures. Of the 22 recaptures for 2000/2001, six fish have been recaptured multiple times. This gives a valuable check on growth rates as some Golden Snapper grow much quicker than others and widely varying growth is sometimes attributed to inaccurate measuring. Multiple recaptures, like a snapper in Leaders Creek which has been recaptured 6 times in 2 years, gives verification of growth rates. This particular fish is slow growing and is comparable to another Snapper which has been recaptured 3 times in the same creek. They have averaged 0.02mm growth a day while another Golden Snapper from the same creek grew an average of 0.25mm per day over 8 months then really put on a growth spurt in a 60 day period by averaging 0.7mm a day.

Larger Black Jewfish have been targeted for the past three years with tagging trips to the Perron Islands. One was recaptured by a commercial fisherman, 18 months after tagging. It had only grown 10mm from 1160mm, had increased in weight by approx 2 kg and had a 30 x 40mm rectangular chunk missing from its gill cover leaving the gills clearly visible underneath. The injury was well healed and was not apparent when originally tagged. These larger fish are caught in 12-20m of water, are brought aboard for measuring and tagging and are then recompressed by lowering them back to the depth they were caught in. A heavy line is tied to the bend of a barbless hook and the eye of the hook is tied to at least a two kilo weight. The hook holds the fish until the weight hits the bottom then the line is lifted and the hook lifts out of the fishes bottom lip.

One surprise this year was discovering a Croaker which looks exactly like a Black Jewfish but has no spots. It does not seem to grow bigger than 300mm and has not been identified by the NT Museum. Unfortunately approximately two hundred of these Croakers have been tagged as Black Jewfish.

Figure 16 shows tagging by year and how the lack of funding for the past two years has resulted in a noticeable decline in the number of fish tagged.

Figure 18 shows the numbers of priority species tagged along with the corresponding recapture rate.

David Woodburn  
Toptag Coordinator

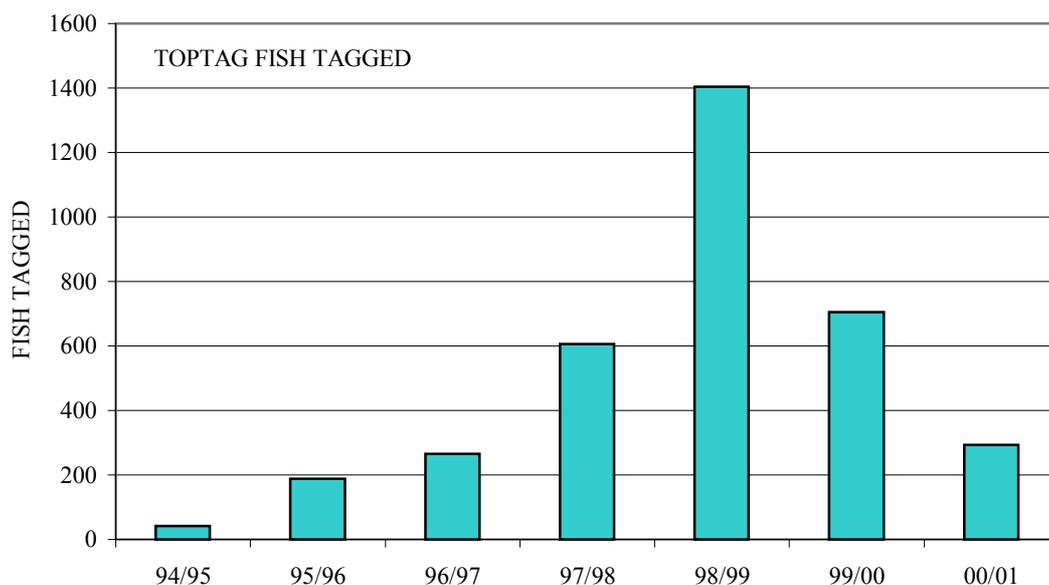


Figure 16: Fish tagged each year in Toptag



Figure 17: David Woodburn with a Black Jewfish 1350mm ready to recompress and release after tagging

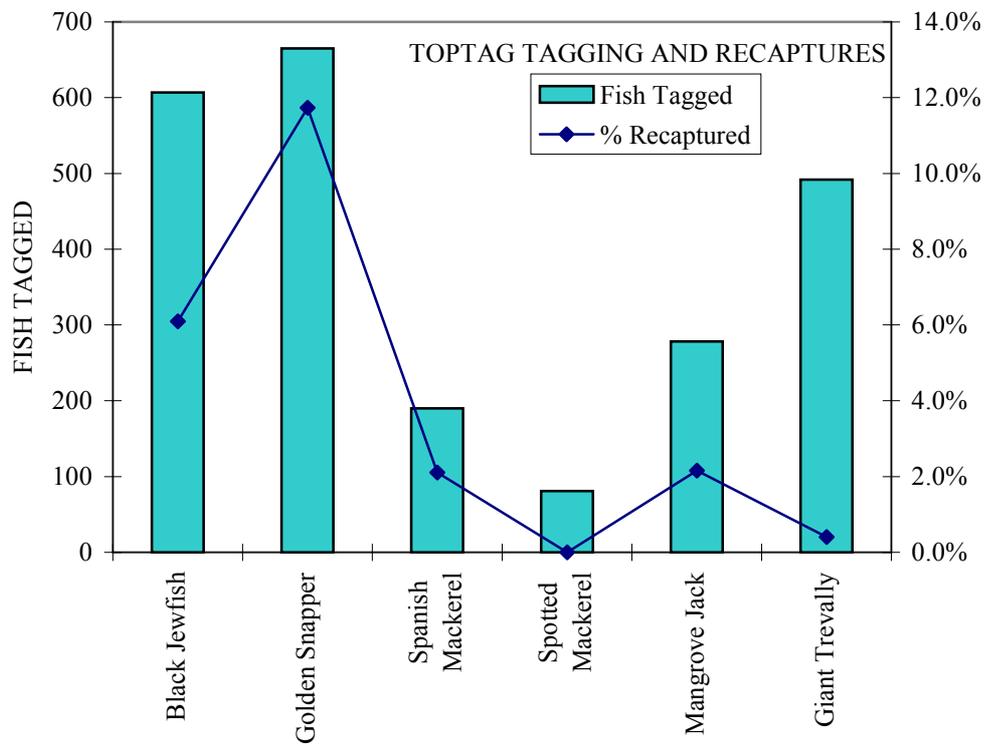


Figure 18: Toptag priority species tagged and recapture rates

## 10. Tastag - Tasmania



Over the past year there has been a reduced tagging effort by members associated with Tastag from previous years. There are a few causes of this and probably the main ones are the fact that we had run out of estuary tags, limited funds and the lack of available spare time for me to put into the program. These problems will hopefully be rectified in the next year.

As mentioned in last years report we were hoping to obtain funding from the Tasmanian Government to help with the financial running of the program. With a great deal of work from Nick Crawford we have secured this funding which we are currently utilising for the purchase of tags and gear.

Tastag is presently waiting on a large order of tags from Hallprint and we have also purchased a number of Tagging Kits from the ANSA shop which we will distribute once the tags have arrived.

It has been a poor year for the amount of fish tagged this year by Tastag participants, only 20 fish reported tagged and these were tagged by only 4 people.

The predominant species tagged by far has been Southern Bluefin Tuna as we encountered one of the best years in history for these fish, the fish turned up in early April and lasted into June. The average size of these was about 20kgs and most boats were able to hook a couple on each trip. One crew of ANSA members tagged and released 15 in 1 day, which would be normally unheard of. Stephen Sutcliffe releasing 200 tagging points worth of Bluefin on that day, and all fish were around 20kg.

During the first weekend of May a group of members from my local club including myself travelled the 5 hours to Pirates Bay and over the 3 days we caught 5 Bluefin. I was fortunate enough to catch my heaviest ever fish, which weighed in at 30.5kgs. This will be a trip certainly remembered for a long time.

ANSA Tasmania along with other fishing groups are currently fighting a battle to retain the rights of amateurs to fish for these Bluefin, there is a belief that we should purchase a quota just like the professionals, hopefully sanity and common sense will prevail.

We have only received one recapture this year which was again a flathead which was recaptured shortly after release and not far away. I have also received notification of several recaptured-tagged Southern Rock Lobsters and this information is passed to the State Govt Fisheries Dept. All tagging recaptures are reported through the message bank on 1800-652-841 and this information is retrieved at regular intervals.

As we will soon have a large supply of tags and some funding I believe that the future for Tastag is bright. We have some very keen and dedicated anglers that will hopefully increase the tagging effort in this state, and as there seems to be a growing awareness of the need to fish in a responsible way, more people will become involved in catch and release fishing. However there is a lot of work to be done to achieve this.

Tony Cowgill  
Tastag Coordinator

## 11. Victag - Victoria



This year the Victag program broke through the 30,000 fish tagged mark and now has almost 31,000 tagged fish on its database. 2000/01 was not the peak of tagging activity with fewer fish tagged than the previous year however 4,695 fish were reported tagged by 30 June. It is estimated that at least another 500 fish will be reported in the next month or two bring the total to around 5,000.

The management structure of Victag has changed somewhat during last year with 2 extra data entry points being set up. Nightmares have occurred when transferring data from the data entry computers to the Victag database but we have now got on top of the problems. The new structure is shown in figure 19.

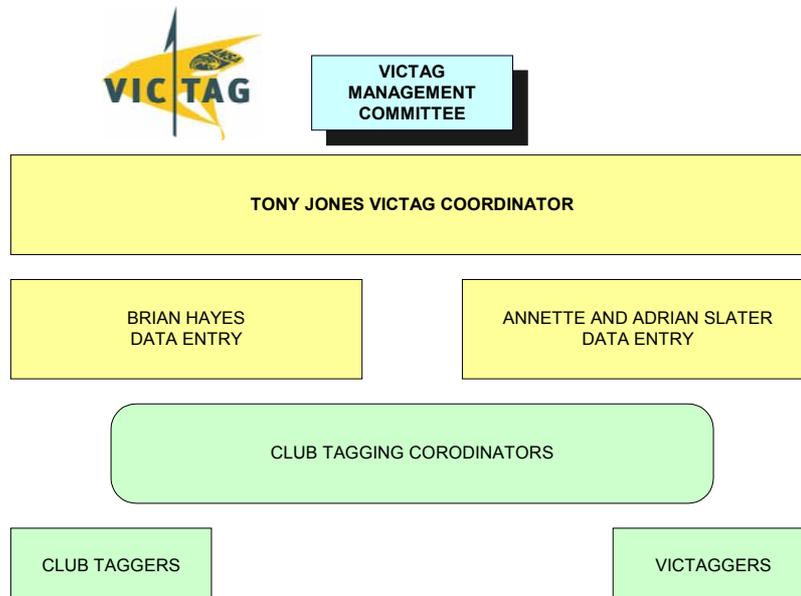


Figure 18: Revised management structure for Victag

Victag acknowledges the support of the Natural Heritage Trust Fisheries Action Program for their continued funding. This year Victag received \$14,000 from NHT.

Thanks go the Brian Hayes (Southern Boat) and Annette and Adrian Slater who have taken on the workload of entering the tagged fish data into the database. With this task taken from my shoulders I have been able to concentrate on management and other administrative tasks.

Thanks also to the Club Tagging Coordinators who have promoted tagging within their clubs in the past 12 months and thanks to the taggers that have tagged even one fish for the year and sent in their data sheets.

Victag is a jointly managed program with Victorian Fisheries, MAFRI and ANSA Vic being represented at management meetings. Thanks go to Ross Winstanley and Patrick Coutin for

their continued support. VRFish has also been keen to promote Victag by including tagging tit bits in their regular newsletters.

Contacting me has been difficult in the past few months, particularly if you relied on email. This did not go smoothly in recent months but hopefully this has been rectified. The new email address for Victag is [rasawmill@hotmail.net.au](mailto:rasawmill@hotmail.net.au) and other details are located in the section on *How to Contact Austag Programs*. If you do not receive a response to your email after a day or two please leave your name and telephone number where you can be contacted after 7.00pm and I will get back to you as soon as work permits.

The data collected concerning tagged fish is available to marine scientists at MAFRI and it is hoped that the data obtained will benefit scientific research into popular fish species in Victorian waters. Data is not available to either commercial or recreational people and people managing Victag are not allowed to interpret the data gathered by the program. To date Victag has not been approached by any other researchers for access to the database.

All the figures and data provided in this report are as at 30 June 2001. Data are being received all the time and entered in the computer. More tagged fish will be entered for 2000/01 as will more recaptures so the figures will continue to increase over the next few months.

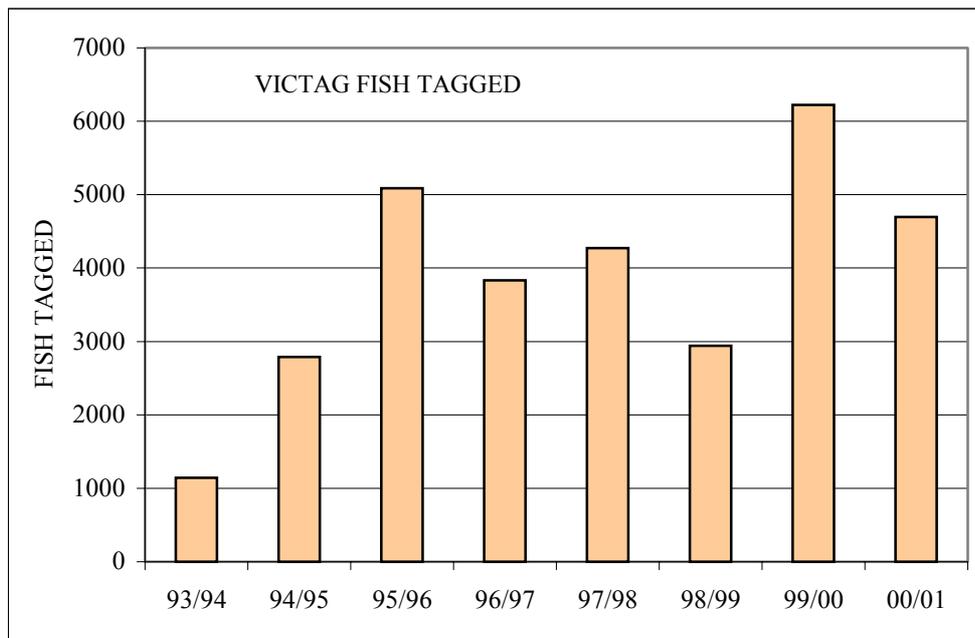


Figure 20: Victag fish tagged each year

This year 4,695 tagged fish have been entered into the Victag database with another 500 to be returned from the data entry people. The main species of fish tagged have been Black Bream (1942 tagged) and small Snapper (1451 tagged). Overall total of fish tagged is 30,984. 27 species of fish were tagged last year. Unfortunately some are not listed on the eligible species for tagging.

Recaptures for the past year stand at 175. This is the highest number of reported recaptures since the tagging program started back in 1994. A total of 841 fish have been recaptured.

Tony Jones  
Victag Coordinator

## 12. Suntag – Queensland



### 12.1 Highlights of 2000/01

Last year I said that it had been the most memorable year for Suntag to date. At the risk of repeating myself 2000/01 has topped that. For the first time since ANSA Qld took over the management of Suntag in 1987 Queensland Fisheries Service undertook a formal review of its operations. This was carried out as part of an overall review of all programs funded from the PPV levy.

As a result of that review new arrangements have been developed for the future management and funding of Suntag with Queensland Fisheries Service, ANSA Qld, Sunfish Qld and InfoFish Services all being a party to the new agreement. These arrangements will commence from 2001/02 and involve an increase in total funding for Suntag to \$69,850 (inc GST).

Again this year with so many things that have happened it is only possible to provide a brief snapshot of the important achievements of 2000/01.

- ☑ Queensland Fisheries Service provided funding of \$27,000 to Suntag from the PPV levy. This included \$15,000 for tags, \$6,000 for the 1800 toll free hotline and for the first time \$6,000 for InfoFish to manage Suntag (all figures ex GST).
- ☑ Townsville City Council contributed \$5,000 for a local tagging project.
- ☑ ANSA Qld clubs, community groups and individuals contributed a further \$4,750 for local projects.
- ☑ Adoption of a new Suntag logo which is part of the Austag family of logos.
- ☑ A total of over 28,213 fish tagged for the year and 2,331 recaptures reported.
- ☑ Suntag reached a significant milestone in passing 250,000 fish tagged. The total fish tagged in now 266,968 with 22,924 recaptures. The overall recapture rate remains steady at 8.6%.
- ☑ A total of 1,560 fishing trips have been recorded in the trip information section of the database for the year with a total of 4,694. This provides catch and effort data for ANSA Qld members that are contributing trip data.
- ☑ The average Suntag tagger fishing trip lasts 5.1 hrs, involves 1.7 fishers, results in 9.4 fish caught of which 0.95 fish was kept.
- ☑ A total of 45,080 tags were issued for the year comprising 25,920 anchor and 19,160 dart tags.
- ☑ A total of around 4,500 Tag and Recapture certificates have been forwarded to fishers recapturing tagged fish and to taggers.
- ☑ A total of 757 taggers participated in Suntag for the year and a total of 4,800 taggers have now tagged at least 1 fish for Suntag.
- ☑ A total of 63 taggers have tagged over 100 fish each for the year. Mick Dohnt is again the leading tagger with 1,508 fish tagged. Mick now has an aggregate total of 11,290 fish tagged. He is the first tagger to have individually tagged over 10,000 fish.
- ☑ There are now 40 Frequent Taggers that have tagged over 1,000 fish and 30 are still current members of ANSA Qld. These taggers have tagged an aggregate of 85,567 fish and that is 32% of the total number of fish tagged.
- ☑ A total of 23 Suntag bulletins were issued by email last year with the bulletins now going to almost 400 email addresses. The bulletins have been further distributed as

- inserts or attachments to Club newsletters with excerpts published in fishing magazines.
- ☑ Non-club membership of Queensland Sportfishers continues to grow with most members participating in Suntag.
  - ☑ The Austag Work Instructions Manual, Tagging Grid Maps and Tagging Projects are all now available on CD-ROM.
  - ☑ Continued the upgrade of location data in the database to include description, map reference, grid reference, latitude and longitude. This requires the conversion of over 80,000 location descriptions. The conversion process is about 90% completed and adding lat/long is 60% completed.
  - ☑ Suntag required 1.3 full time equivalent staff this year to manage it at its current level. Resources and infrastructure support for this are provided by InfoFish Services by agreement with ANSA Qld.
  - ☑ Suntag continues to manage the tagging data for the Mangrove Jack research project being undertaken by QDPI with funding from the FRDC.
  - ☑ Suntag is also managing the tagging component of the Age Validation of Tailor project being undertaken by QDPI with funding from FRDC.
  - ☑ Management of tag and recapture data for the Maryborough Sportfishing Club in their NHT funded project involving tagging at the Mary River and Tinana Creek Barrages.
  - ☑ Management of tag and recapture data for the Dawson Catchment Coordinating Association for tagging of Yellowbelly and Saratoga as part of a large project on the Dawson River in Central Queensland.
  - ☑ Management of Mud Crab tagging data for AFFS and Weipa Catchment Coordinating Group at Weipa and for Holloways Environment Education Centre in the Barron River.
  - ☑ Data on tagging and recaptures from Hervey Bay to Mackay was supplied to the Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone, Estuaries and Waterway Management for a project examining the effect of environmental flows on fisheries resources.
  - ☑ Management of tag and recapture data for Capricorn Sunfish for a 3 year study into critical barramundi nursery areas in Central Queensland.

## 12.2 *Service Standards*

The following service standards for Suntag apply to internal operations for the collection of data and the provision of feedback to persons involved in the program. This provides the basis for a realistic measure of performance.

- ☑ Data on tagged fish and fishing trips is to be forwarded to the Suntag Coordinator within 30 days of a fish being tagged.
- ☑ Data on tagged fish and fishing trips is to be entered into the Suntag database within 30 days of receipt.
- ☑ This provides for a maximum of 60 days from the time a fish is tagged to the time the data is available in the Suntag database (currently about 80% of data entry meets this standard).
- ☑ For recaptures of tagged fish reported by the general public through the 1800 toll free hotline feedback is provided in real time over the telephone (currently this feedback is provided 80% of the time).
- ☑ For recaptures of tagged fish reported by the general public through any means written feedback in the form of a letter and certificate are forwarded within 10 working days (currently 80% of the feedback meets the standard).
- ☑ Tag and recapture certificates are provided to both the person that recaptures a tagged fish and the person that tagged the fish and include the complete recapture history of the fish.

- Where a fish has moved a significant distance between tag and recapture a map showing the movement of the fish is provided as part of the feedback.

The reason the data standard is not met all the time results from the tagging data not being available. This is because the tagger or the club has not submitted the data or it has not been entered into the Suntag database within the required timeframe. Also it is quite common for a fish to be recaptured within the data entry timeframes (ie 60 days) when the data is still being received or entered. As a result the achievement of the standard 80% of the time is considered acceptable.

### 12.3 Tagging Awards

Taggers have their achievements recognised in a number of ways. They can gain recognition through the National Tagging Excellence Award, National Tagging Achievement Award and now through the Frequent Tagger group. The previous National Tagging Master Award has been discontinued.

This year there were a further 5 Tagging Excellence Awards granted to Queensland taggers as shown in figure 21. There were also 60 Tagging Achievement Awards given out to Qld taggers this year.

Tagger	Species	TAA Year	TEA Year	Number
Trevor Inskip	Barramundi	98/99	00/01	966
Robert Harding	Barred Javelin	97/98	00/01	1054
Tony Stewart	Red Emperor	97/98	00/01	376
Michael Dohnt	Speckled Javelin	98/99	00/01	593
Colin Gott	Golden Perch	95/96	00/01	670
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>5</b>

Figure 21: Qld Tagging Excellence Awards 2000/01

Tagging of 1,000 fish is required to qualify as a Frequent Tagger. A further 5 taggers in 2000/01 became members of this group. These were Robert Harding of Captag, Phil Aspinall of Weipa, Matthew Mott of Kingaroy, Trevor Inskip of Weipa and Ken Brett of Captag.

Each year a special award is made to the person that tags the most fish. This award is a special shield provided by the Queensland Fisheries Service. The Award is the Phil Brooks Memorial Award in memory of Phil Brooks who was an avid supporter of the tagging program.

As indicated above this year the award, once again, went to Mick Dohnt of the Brisbane Sportfishing Club who tagged 1,508 fish. Mick has also become the first individual tagger to have tagged over 10,000 fish with his aggregate total of 11,290.

Another award within Suntag is the Club Excellence Award for quality of tagging data. This is a shield donated by David Moore and was introduced in 1995/96 based on a series of 10 key indicators, which measure the quality of a club's performance in tagging and accuracy in data presentation. In 2000/01 Burdekin Recreational Sportfishing Club and Capricorn Tag and Release Sportfishing Club were joint winners of this award.

Figure 22: Mick Dohnt doing what he does best in catching another fish to tag

## *12.4 Tagging and Recaptures*

The tag usage rate, which is the percentage of tags used compared to those issued, is an indicator of the status of administration of the program as it reflects how effectively the tags are distributed and their use monitored. Tag usage is the number of fish tagged plus a 5% allowance for loss of tags, tag failure and tags used but not recorded, and this allowance is considered conservative.

The usage rate for 2000/01 was 66% compared with 82% for 1999/00. During the year there were 11,670 tags purchased/issued to AFFS of which 3,886 were used. Therefore for Suntag taggers the usage rate was 73%. The overall usage rate since 1987/88 remains at 74% which is considered satisfactory. For 2000/01 a total of 45,080 tags were issued with 29,600 used and 28,213 fish tagged. A summary of tag usage since 1987/88 is contained in figure 23.

The total number of tagged fish in the Suntag database is now 266,968 with 12 species where over 5,000 fish have been tagged in total. There have now been 57,107 Barramundi, 28,668 Australian Bass and 25,170 Dusky Flathead and tagged since 1985/86. Figure 24 shows the number of fish tagged for each of the species where over 5,000 fish have been tagged while figure 25 shows the number of fish tagged where between 1,000 and 5,000 fish have been tagged.

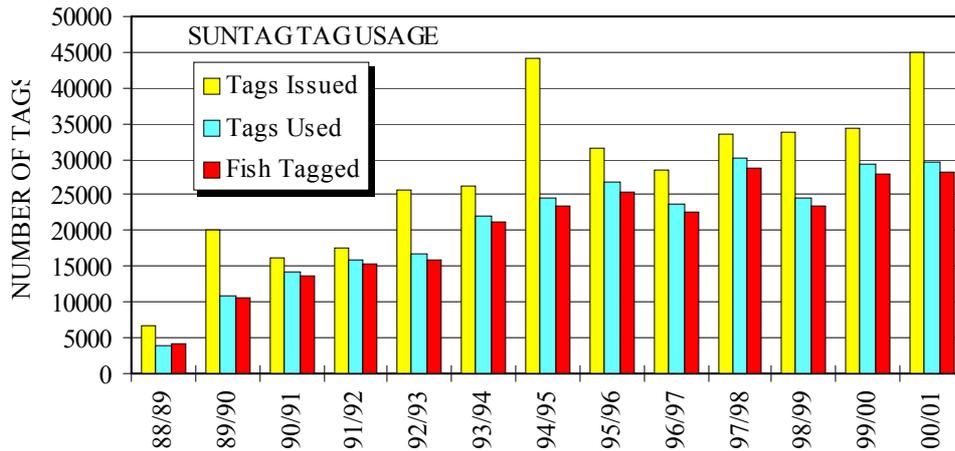


Figure 23: Suntag Tags Issued, Used and Fish Tagged

The total number of recaptures reported in 2000/01 was 2,331 (6.4 recaptures/day), which takes the total number of recaptures to 22,924 since 1995/86. Figures 24 and 25 show the overall recapture rates for all species where over 1,000 fish have been tagged. A total of 7 species have a recapture rate in excess of 10% with Red Emperor having the highest rate of 22.1%, while the rate for Barramundi is also high at 13.0%.

Barramundi continue to provide the greatest number of recaptures with 7,404 while the number of Dusky Flathead recaptures is now 2,777. There have also been over 1,000 recaptures of Gold Spot Estuary Cod (1,761), Australian Bass (2,262) and Mangrove Jack (1,289).

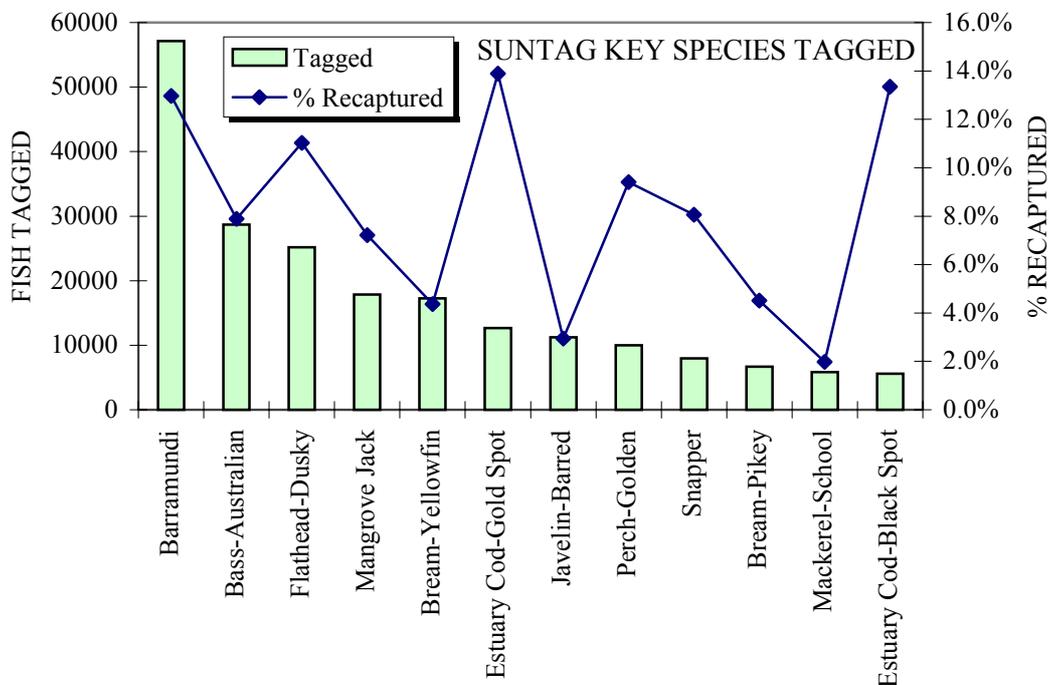


Figure 24: Suntag key species numbers tagged 1985/2001 and recapture rates

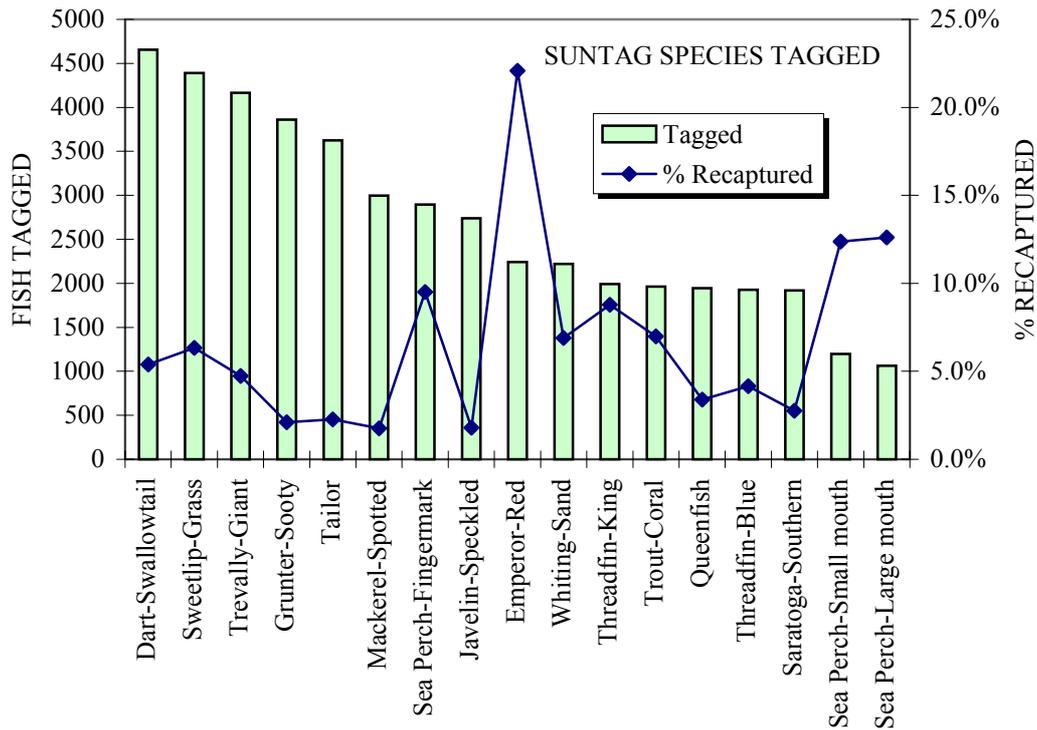


Figure 25: Suntag species numbers tagged 1985/2001 and recapture rates

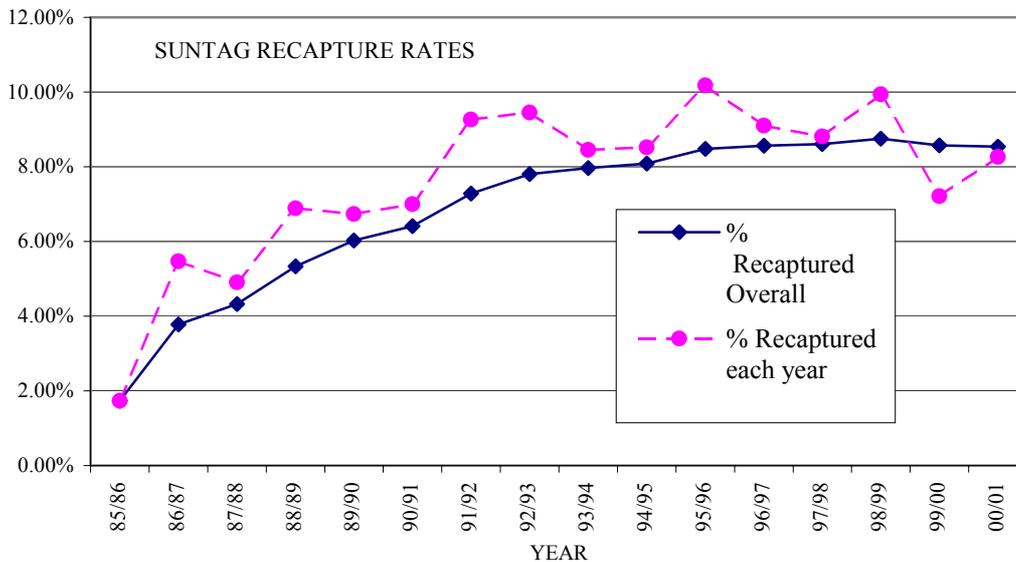


Figure 26: Recapture rates for all Suntag species from 1985/86 to 2000/01

The Suntag recapture rate has for a number of years been used as an indicator of changes in fishing effort. While there are a number of factors which influence the tag recapture rate most of these are near constant from year to year or small in their impact on the recapture rate. The greatest variable is fishing effort and this can be easily demonstrated by examining recapture rates from remote fishing locations as compared with heavily fished areas.

Figure 26 shows the recapture rates from 1985/86 to 2000/01. There was a significant rise in the rates from 1985/86 to 1986/87, which coincided with the introduction of the 1800 toll free hotline, which made the reporting of recaptures simpler and easier. In 1986/87 the recapture rate was 3.75% and it has steadily risen each year since then to be 8.75% in 1998/99. At the

end of 2000/01 there was a drop in the rate to 8.54%. The recapture rates suggest that fishing effort had over doubled in the 9 years from 1986/87 to 1995/96 however the overall rate has remained largely unchanged between 8.48% and 8.75% for the last 5 years. This would indicate that fishing effort has remained stable over the last few years.

Two surveys into participation in recreational fishing in 1996 and 1998 have shown little change in the overall participation rate over that time which supports the data from the recapture rate.

Recaptures advised by commercial fisher comprise 7.5% of the total number of recaptures. Non reporting of recaptures by commercial fishers is considered to be high based on advise from commercial fishers themselves.

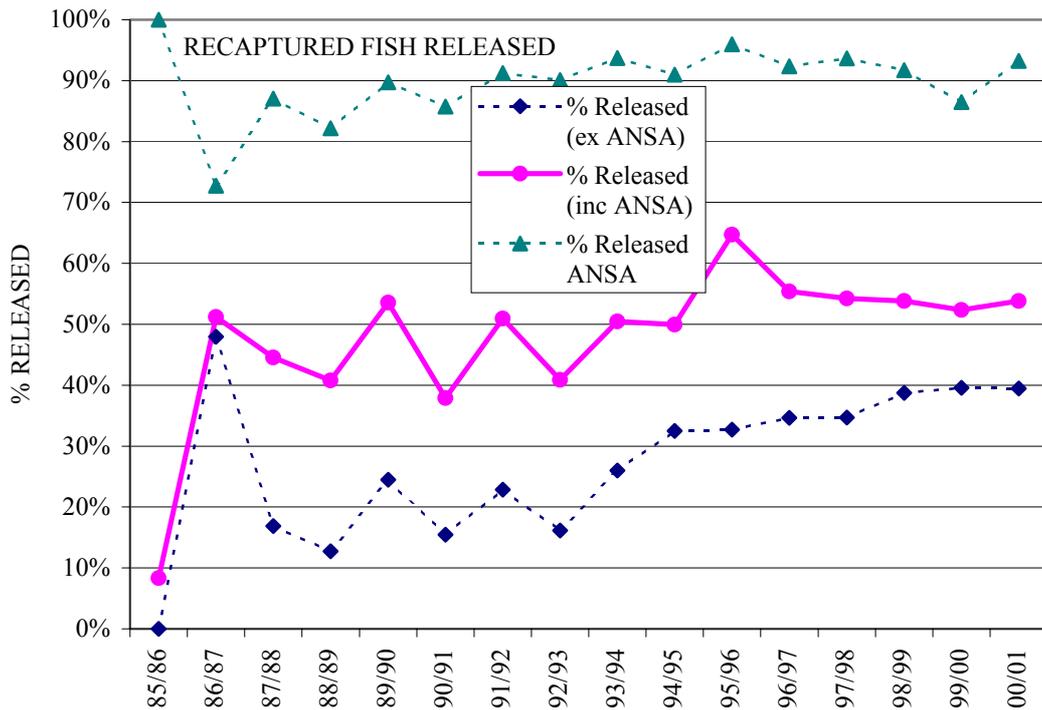


Figure 27: Percentage of recaptured tagged fish released by recreational fishers

Another interesting use of the data is to examine the trend in releasing fish among recreational fishers. This is by comparing the number of recaptured tagged fish that are released with those that have been kept each year although this analysis does not take into account whether the



Figure 28: The recapture rate for Red Emperor is the highest at 22.1%

## 12.5 Catch and Effort

The collection of fishing trip data to gain catch and effort statistics commenced in 1996/97 for Suntag taggers. While any member of ANSA Qld that goes fishing can submit trip details the entire number of trips recorded have been submitted by taggers. This is not unexpected as taggers are already filling in tag details and very little additional data is required to be recorded to obtain trip details.

A total of 4,539 fishing trips covering the period from 1/3/97 to 30/6/01 are recorded in the database with a further 1,475 trips recorded for 2000/01.

Over the past 5 years there have been a total of 49,826 fish caught for 40,921 hours of effort. Based on this the average Suntag tagger fishing trip is 5.1hrs in duration and 1.7 fishers take part in each trip. A total of 4,532 fish have been kept for the 4,539 trips. On each trip there is an average of 9.4 fish caught of which 0.95 fish or about 1 fish are kept.

Figure 29 provides a summary of the fate of fish caught. As the data are largely provided by members that tag a high percentage of fish the results are not surprising. It should be noted that only 10.1% of the catch was kept with around 90% of recaptured tagged fish being released again. This compares with the rate ranging from 15-21% for fish kept by ANSA NSW members over the past 4 years. However the comparison needs to account for data coming from mostly taggers in Qld and a proportion of fish tagged were over legal size and could have been kept but were tagged and released by choice. Fish that were released without tags were generally those undersized and too small to tag.

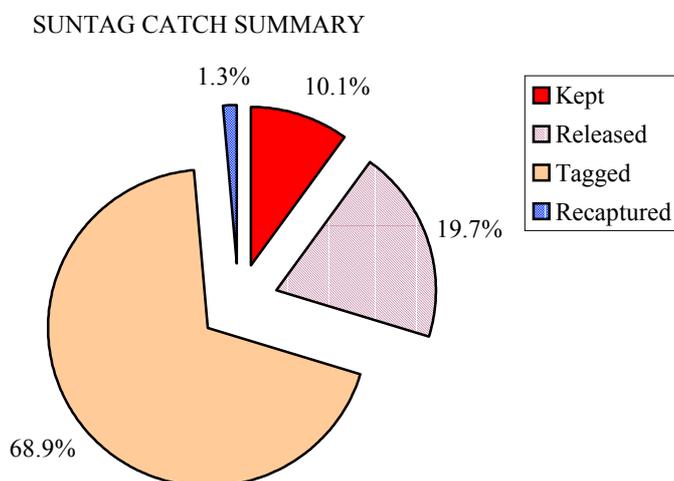


Figure 29: Catch summary of fish caught by Suntag taggers

Figure 30 shows the fate of fish caught on fishing trips by Suntag taggers for the past 5 years. The increase in the number of trips recorded results from more and more taggers providing complete trip details.

Figure 31 shows the time taken in minutes to catch a fish of any size for the past 4 years. It should be noted that effort is measured by the total time on or at the water which includes

travel time on the water and any time spent bait collecting etc. It is considered that this is the simplest means of collecting time and is likely to get a more consistent response.

Figure 31 makes for an interesting comparison with the ANSA NSW Catch and Release statistics shown in figure 11. Both States showed a sharp increase in the time taken to catch a fish in 1998/99 however the time has marginally increased in Qld since then while falling substantially in NSW.

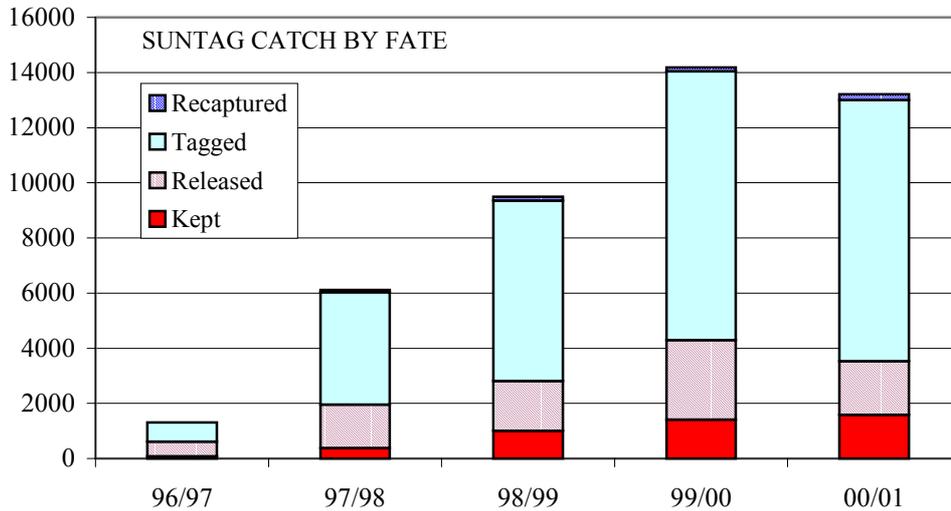


Figure 30: Summary of fate of fish caught by Suntag Taggers from 1996/2001

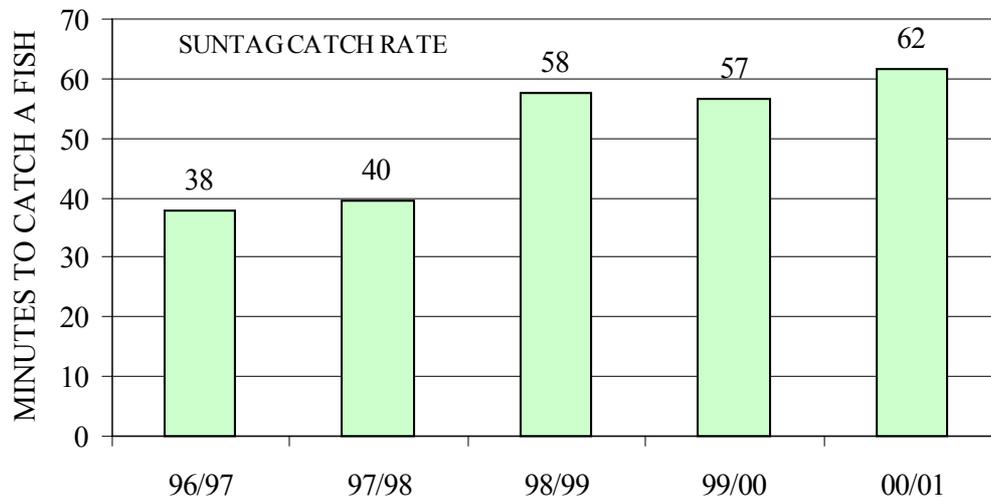


Figure 31: Time taken for a fish to be caught by Suntag taggers from 1996/2001

## 12.6 Targets for 2001/2002

The following are the targets for achievement for 2001/02:

- Complete conversion of location data to the current standard (90% completed)
- Complete geocoding of location data (60% completed)
- Upgrading of InfoTag software
- Revamp of Suntag component of web site

Bill Sawynok  
Suntag Coordinator

## 13. *Austag 2001/02*

The focus for Austag for the coming year will include:

- Consolidation of programs in States that have started in recent years
- Development and expansion of the collection of ANSA catch and effort data
- Formalisation of Quality procedures
- Develop use of Internet and email for distributing Austag information
- Develop linkages between InfoTag and GIS databases.