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FISHERIES RESEARCH AND
DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

TUNA CHAMPIONS v2.0

Bluefin and beyond



TUNA CHAMPIONS

Sean Tracey & India Thompson

March 2025

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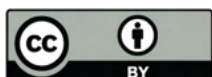
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Researcher contact details		FRDC contact details	
Name:	Professor Sean Tracey	Address:	25 Geils Court Deakin ACT 2600
Address:	Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies University of Tasmania Private Bag 49, Hobart, Tasmania 7001, Australia	Phone:	02 6285 0400
Phone:	(03) 6226 8286	Email:	frdc@frdc.com.au
Email:	sean.tracey@utas.edu.au	Web:	www.frdc.com.au
Web:	www.tunachampions.com.au ; www.imas.edu.au		

In submitting this report, the researcher has agreed to FRDC publishing this material in its edited form.

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Acknowledgments

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Australian recreational game fishing community for embracing and championing our program. Your enthusiastic participation and commitment have propelled our mission forward—locally, nationally, and globally. The positive transformations we’ve witnessed highlight the importance of responsible fishing practices, creating a win-win for everyone: the fish, the fishers, and the fisheries.

A special thanks goes out to those who have supported Tuna Champions from the very beginning. Managing such a dynamic and ever-evolving initiative hasn’t been easy, but the dedication of our diverse and expert team has been instrumental in our success.

This includes our steering committee, the International Game Fishing Association, the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, and the Game Fishing Clubs across Australia.

Our program is grounded in science, and we owe a great deal to the Institute of Marine and Antarctic Studies for their invaluable contributions. We’re also deeply grateful for the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Government, whose funding has sustained us for over six years.

Finally, we want to recognize our incredible ambassadors. Your tireless efforts to spread the word—within your communities and beyond—have made an extraordinary impact. To each of you: thank you for believing in our mission and making a difference that truly matters.



Executive Summary

TUNA CHAMPIONS – FROM VISION TO REALITY

Tuna Champions (TC) is a groundbreaking program designed to inspire recreational tuna fishers across Australia to adopt the best fishing and handling practices. By focusing on animal welfare, minimising waste, and reducing unnecessary mortality, TC empowers fishers to care for their catch—whether they’re keeping it for a meal or releasing it to fight another day. Backed by evidence-based educational facts and modern communication strategies, the program has sparked a ripple effect of positive change, driven by the power of ‘nudge’ theory.

The vision? A future where using best-practice fishing techniques isn’t just encouraged—it’s simply “how we do things now.”

Building on the success of its first funding cycle, the Australian Government reaffirmed its commitment to TC by funding version 2.0 in 2021 through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC). This initiative, led by the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) at the University of Tasmania, marked a significant leap forward for the program.

TC v2.0 expanded its focus beyond Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT), the cornerstone of TC v1.0, to include other key tuna species such as Yellowfin Tuna, Longtail Tuna, Skipjack Tuna, and Albacore Tuna. This expansion not only broadened the program’s geographic reach—from southern waters to New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory, and Western Australia—but also paved the way for a global impact.

In particular, Yellowfin Tuna presented an exciting opportunity for TC’s educational ethos to cross borders, inspiring other nations to embrace stewardship programs that champion responsible fishing practices. With its growing reach and influence, TC is shaping a more sustainable future for tuna fisheries worldwide.

“How times have changed. Years ago, how full your freezer was, was the main indicator as to whether you were a champion or not.”

– Jamie Peel, Grassroots Fisher

“It’s amazing the difference in the meat quality after the correct dispatching and ice etc. The Tuna Champions work has made great inroads to changing habits.”

– Stuart Richardson, Grassroots Fisher

“We had the pleasure of spending some time with Tuna Champions recently at the Riviera Port Lincoln Tuna Classic. They showed us how to prepare a tuna for eating, maintaining absolute top quality for the table. If you haven’t seen the educational material produced by them, please take a look- and as always, focus on sustainability.”

– Asher Dezser, RecfishSA

“If it’s your first time chasing tuna, a reminder to stick to catch limits, find out how to best handle tuna and not waste your catch. Visit the Tuna Champions website for great advice on using responsible fishing practices for Southern Bluefin Tuna.”

– Fisheries Tasmania

Future proof

This ambitious project shows that strong partnerships, positive community engagement, and an effective education program can influence a change in attitudes and behaviours. It's a win for tuna, the recreational fishing community, science communication and the development of sector driven stewardship programs to complement fisheries management strategies.

The principals of Tuna Champions have now been adopted by several other programs across Australia and covering a range of species, including Shark Mates, Care for Cod, Flathead for the Future, Snapper Stewards and Dhufish Forever.

A photograph of a fishing logbook form. The form is green and white. At the top, there is a red stamp that reads 'NO A 649151'. Below this, there are several fields for recording data: 'DATE: / /', 'TIME: : ☐ AM ☐ PM', 'LOCALITY:', 'SPECIES:', 'LENGTH (cm):', and 'METHOD:'. To the right of the form, there is a diagram of a fish with a measurement line labeled 'TOTAL LENGTH'. A pen is visible at the bottom right of the form.

Key achievements

4.7M people
reached
online

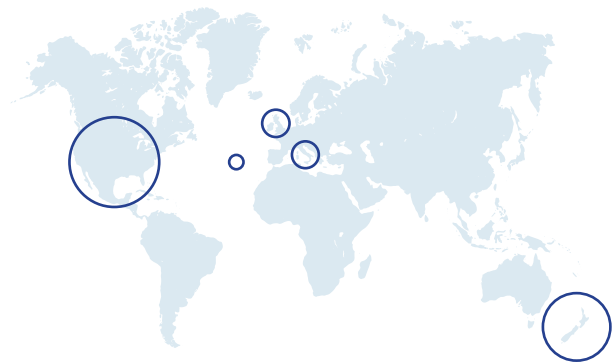
created the

**Golden Charter
Operator**

26 face-to-face
presentations in 6
different states and
5 countries

1000+

shared images with the
#tunachampions





Background

Stewardship is a recognised component of improving societal practices across a range of areas. Improving stewardship through knowledge brokering has great potential to complement and enhance regulatory initiatives designed to protect ecosystem function through sustainable resource management. The strength of stewardship over regulatory initiatives is the genuine drive of individuals to contribute to improved societal norms through a learned and shared understanding of the benefits of the activity that is being advocated for. On the other hand, regulatory approaches can be met with a degree of scepticism and resistance due to a lack of understanding of the purpose of the regulations and a natural resistance of being ‘told what to do’.

Pathways to successful stewardship are deeply embedded in understanding the human psyche and well-established behavioural science theories have been put forward to address this. Applying the core principles of these theories often occurs innately through society as they are born out of our human nature and developed cognitive processes but understanding how to apply these theories provides a powerful tool to maximise the efficiency of developing stewardship.

The Tuna Champions program was born out of the FRDC project 2017-123: The role of the recreational fisher in the stewardship of the Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) fishery (Tracey, Cleary et al. 2023). It had the explicit goal of affecting behavioural change in the recreational SBT fishery by improving stewardship through educating fishers on science-based ‘best practice’ for both the release of caught fish and the harvesting of fish retained for consumption.

It is not about directly affecting the sustainability of the fishery (although there are small benefits through reduced wastage of fish), rather it is about increasing accountability of fishers to ‘do the right thing’ and encourage their fellow fishers to do the same.

The program was established on a sound framework encompassing both behavioural science and marketing strategies. Behavioural change is driven through ‘nudging’, a theory born out of behavioural economics, political theory and behavioural sciences that uses positive reinforcement and indirect suggestion to influence behaviour of groups or individuals, in this case the community of fishers that target SBT. Through the course of time the nudging strategy is adopted by the community as they increase their knowledge on why improved practices are beneficial and they begin to organically perpetuate through the community as they encourage each other to improve their practices. This then creates a snowball of momentum whereby the behavioural change occurs, and stewardship increases. The program has been hugely successful with almost a third of all SBT fishers aware of the program after it had been running for 20-months, much higher for the most avid fishers (63%) as assessed in 2019 as part of the National recreational fishing survey of SBT (Tracey, Lyle et al. 2020). Even more encouraging was the evidence of behavioural change with between 10 and 25% of respondents that had heard about the program indicated that they had improved various practices relating to the retention and release of SBT. Anecdotal reports and testimonial from those within the SBT recreational community suggest that these percentages have likely increased since that time, with clear evidence of social sanctioning and peer-to-peer education occurring on social media.

Need

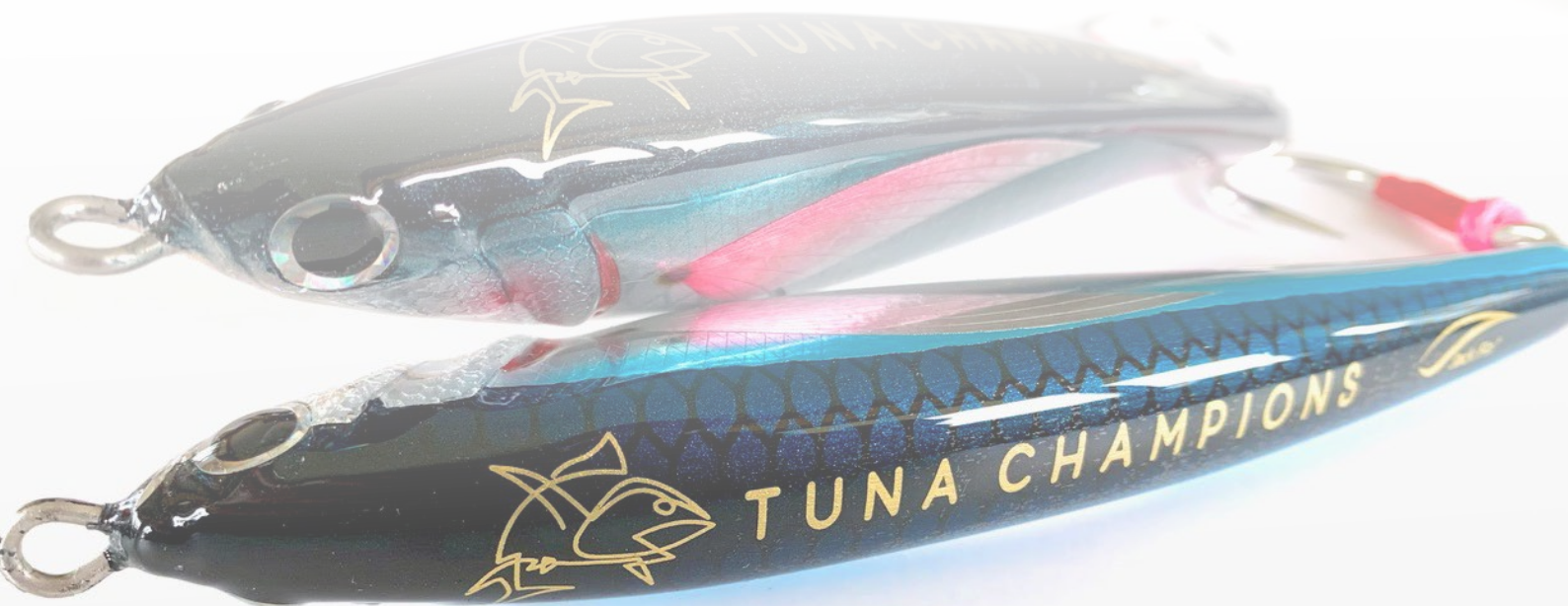
During the initial conceptual steering committee meeting of the Tuna Champions program in 2018, it was identified, and supported by marketing specialists, to focus on a single species, in this case the SBT (Tracey, Cleary et al. 2023). If this was done well, it would minimise dilution of the messaging and improve the uptake and momentum of increased stewardship in that particular fishery. It was noted however that the messages would likely ‘spill over’ to other species, particularly other tuna species as the practices being promoted were applicable to them. Then further, that the messaging and recognition of the value of stewardship as it relates to recreational fishing practices would spill over more broadly to all species. This effect has now been realised with fishers that target other tuna species already organically sharing and promoting the message of tuna champions and more broadly, several other recreational stewardship programs have been developed or are currently in the funding or conceptual phases including Shark Mates, Snapper Stewards, Care for Cod, Flathead for the Future and Dhufish Forever.

The recognition by the Federal Government of the success of the Tuna Champions program was highlighted in the commitment to fund an extension of the program announced with the launch of the 2021 Federal budget.

This funding facilitated the opportunity to broaden the program to the next level by increasing the scope of the project to directly focus on the inclusion of other key tuna species in Australia. The geographic distribution of these species and the recreational fisheries that target them will increase the breadth of the program around Australia.

We envisioned the improved stewardship and education within the recreational fishing sector targeting tuna will promote responsible fishing practices, including:

- reducing wastage of harvested fish
- improved animal welfare
- encouraging better fish handling to achieve a ‘quality meat fishery’ and to maximise post-release survival rates, and
- increasing effective catch and release techniques.



Objectives

- Objective 1 / Deliver an education program and communication strategy focusing on responsible fishing practices within the recreational sector and educating grass-roots fishers on best practices around all aspects of their interactions with key tuna species in Australia.
- Objective 2 / Develop a research hub to facilitate ongoing recreational fisher engagement in studies pertaining to key tuna species in Australia.
- Objective 3 / Develop a self-funding model to ensure the long-term sustainability of Tuna Champions independent of Commonwealth government funding.

Objective 1 / Deliver an education program and communication strategy focusing on responsible fishing practices within the recreational sector and educating grass-roots fishers on best practices around all aspects of their interactions with key tuna species in Australia.

EXTENSION AND ADOPTION

Performance Indicators achieved:

- **Agreement between all relevant stakeholders engaged in the steering committee meetings on the key messages of the education and engagement program.**

The communication and engagement strategy continues to be based on the successful multi-faceted approach designed and implemented through the first iteration of the Tuna Champions program (TC v1.0) (Tracey, Cleary et al. 2023) and refined based on the results of a questionnaire related to the program delivered during the National Recreational Fishing Survey for Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) (Tracey, Lyle et al. 2020).

Tuna Champions was developed based of a realisation that there was room for improvement in the catching, handling, keeping, preparing and releasing of SBT within the recreational sector in Australia. It was clear that there was a lack of science-based information and education on the correct handling methods for this species and the importance of considering this given their unique

biological and physiological traits. Specifically, that they are endothermic and require special treatment to ensure the best meat quality can be attained which ideally will minimise wastage of meat that might be discarded due to perceived poor eating qualities.

The Tuna Champions message is not one of sustainability, rather accountability, in that we all have a role to play in being stewards for the ocean and the species that live in them. If we engage with these fish, we should ensure that we are making the most of each fish that is harvested and also ensuring, that if they are released, that they have the best chance of survival.

The program has produced a range of educational material and communication strategies during TC v1.0, we have continued to develop on these growing the areas that have had the most traction and developing content that included tuna species beyond SBT. We have branched out to engage the recreational fishers on the east and west coast of Australia, particularly those that target Yellowfin Tuna (YFT).



THE KEYS TO SUCCESS

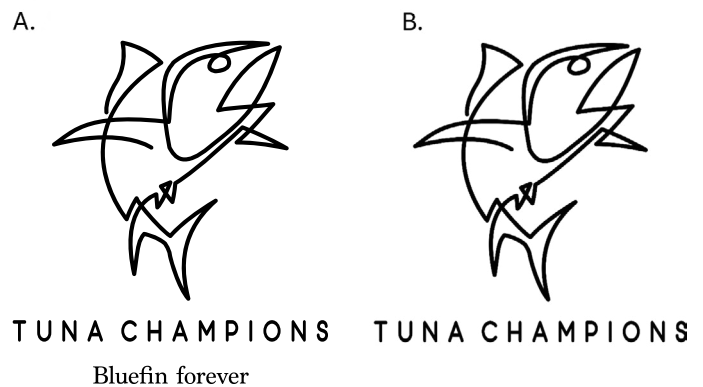
There are several components of the program which we feel have been key to its success. These include: Our Brand, the Tuna Champions Ambassadors and our website which is the hub for all our educational material.

Our Brand

VML, previously Y&R marketing were engaged at the beginning of TC v1.0 in 2018 to develop branding for the Tuna Champions program. A central focus of the branding was a logo designed to evolve with the program beyond the focus of SBT to other tuna species. The logo has now become broadly recognisable and appears on all our merchandise and promotion material. Our brand placement is regularly seen across a range of media including, regular appearances on national television shows hosted by our ambassadors, and in 2021, unexpectedly, it appeared on the high rating national television show 'Married at first sight'. As one of the main characters was introduced wearing a 'Reel Brand x Tuna Champions' collaboration t-shirts.

The brand logo during TC v1.0 had the tagline 'bluefin forever' included under the logo. The placement of the text made the evolution of the program to include all tuna species for TC v2.0 simple. By removing the tagline, the logo evolved with the program – now representing all 'tuna forever'.

Figure 1. A) The original Tuna Champions 'Bluefin Forever' logo used for version one of the program. The logo was designed by Y&R to be carried forward throughout the project by changing the focus species from bluefin to all tuna through the removal of the 'Bluefin forever'. B) The version 2.0 of the Tuna Champions logo which is inclusive of all species.



Tuna Champions Ambassadors – our champions of change

Performance Indicators achieved:

- **Ongoing engagement by all identified champions of change (ambassadors).**

Our ambassadors have been the backbone of the TC communication program. Each ambassador is strategically chosen based on their position within the fishing and broader community, their allegiance to the key messages of the program and their networks and communication skills. Their engagement is organic, they can participate as much or as little as they choose. It is important to us that the message they are sharing resonates with them. Several of our ambassadors have also been key to some of our brand collaborations and many feature in our education content.

The reciprocal relationship between ambassadors and our program has allowed us to broadcast our message deeply within the fishing community. By involving ambassadors, we provide them with a sense of accreditation, affirming their role in driving responsible fishing practices—an increasingly important aspect of modern societal values. Rather than hearing the Tuna Champions message from an impersonal “authority” the message is delivered from like-minded individuals or even “idols” in some cases. This relatability fosters greater acceptance of the educational content, ultimately contributing to the program’s success.



Moving forward with our Ambassadors

In 2022, we developed and introduced a prospectus for application to become a TC ambassador. This allowed us to provide some guidance on the expectations of the relationship, and provide an avenue for fishers

to pitch themselves, and allow the program to ensure we are engaging champions of change from around the country who we may not have been familiar with.



DO YOU BELIEVE YOU APPLY BEST PRACTICE WHEN CATCHING TUNA AND WOULD BE A GOOD FIT AS AN AMBASSADOR FOR OUR PROGRAM?

We are actively looking for people to advocate for our program through applying the best practices which can be found in our Code of Conduct. This mutually beneficial relationship allows you to share the Tuna Champions Ethos which benefits our program, and we share you caring for your catch and provide exposure throughout our channels.



BEING A TUNA CHAMPION MEANS DOING IT BETTER AND KNOWING MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU'RE CATCHING

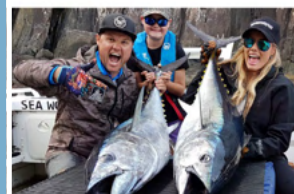
READ MORE

WHAT'S INVOLVED?

Being a Tuna Champion means both caring for your catch whether you're retaining or releasing fish and promoting this to fellow fishers. This involves handling your catch with care by using single hooks, knifemans and the Jima process for dispatching to name a few. Not only does this result in giving the fish a better chance of survival if releasing, but it would mean a better result on your plate if you choose to keep one for a food.

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR US?

There is no expectation of the quantity of content delivered, as we understand that fish aren't always on the clock. But if you get that great photo or video which shows you adopting the Tuna Champions Ethos tag us, so we can repost your content and share it with our online community. You must live and breathe the Tuna Champions Ethos and be willing to share that with friends and the wider community.



There is however an expectation of quality as outlined:

Catch

- ☐ Using single hooks when releasing tuna
- ☐ Heavy gear (line, leader, rods and reels)

Handle

- ☐ Wet hands
- ☐ Knifemans landing nets
- ☐ Foam mats for handling fish onboard
- ☐ Efficiency whether dispatching or releasing

Release

- ☐ Using lip grips to control larger fish boatside
- ☐ Gently placing fish in the water
- ☐ Tagging (if applicable) in the correct location

Keep

- ☐ Dispatching fish using the Jima process (brain spike, bleed, pit, gut and gill)
- ☐ Using fish in a saltwater ice slurry

Prepare

- ☐ Keeping fish chilling until the core temperature nears 0°C
- ☐ Utilising the fish to maximise yield and minimise wastage

If we have events in your region your presence and attendance at our booths or shows would be invaluable to help spread the message. Even conversations at your local pub with fellow fishers help change the understanding of fish handling and care.

We would also greatly appreciate if you share some of our content to help spread the message. We have some posts with over a million interactions.



WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

We offer you a platform where we will share your brand, images and of course fish photos in our network of followers. This gives you international exposure and directs our followers towards your profile. Being an ambassador is also highly regarded amongst fishers and is acknowledging your efforts to be a part of the change and caring for your catch. We also provide directed advice on improving your own fishing and handling practices.



Being a Tuna Champions ambassador comes with a responsibility and as an ambassador we appreciate you follow the code of conduct when possible and we also choose to avoid the politics of fisheries management. We are about awareness and accountability that we all have a role to play and as Tuna Champions we want to make sure we minimise wastage and make the most of every fish whether we are keeping it to eat or releasing it to fight another day. We understand it is a learning curve and there are situations where you may not be able to apply our ethos, but there would be an that you learn our material and apply it. It is based on solid science and practices used by commercial fishers to maximise the value of their catch. However, if you are seen to be neglecting our messaging, it is within the rights of Tuna Champions to revoke your status within our program, an encouraging our positive messaging is of the utmost priority.

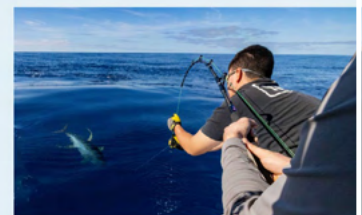


Photo: Al Williams



Some feature engagements with our ambassadors

Performance Indicators achieved:

- **Active participation by champions of change to disseminate the key messages through their networks and communication mediums.**

Throughout the program, we've partnered with our ambassadors to amplify the message of Tuna Champions far and wide. This collaboration creates a win-win: our ambassadors align themselves with the positive ethos of best-practice fishing, while helping us extend our reach by sharing our content with their extensive social media networks. Together, we're creating a ripple effect that inspires responsible fishing and conservation practices across the community.

Filming with Richard Abela

- **How to care for your catch**
 - From handling tuna, right through to making his own Ice, Richie explains the importance of caring for fish, both as a fisher and for his clients and how this has changed over the course of his years fishing.

“This (Ice Machine) is my latest edition to the Dreamcatcher, 'looking after your fish regime'...This has allowed me to get one step ahead of the game and let's face it, ice is getting expensive, especially when you need to take it in the quantities you do to take care of these fish.”

– Richie Abela (Golden Tuna Charter Operator)

- **Chiller bags**
 - In this short video Richie discusses the importance of equipment such as Chiller Bags, to produce a quality finished product. He also discusses how equipment can limit your capacity to appropriately care for fish, so ensuring everything is prepared is essential to the process.

“You can't look after fish without equipment, what we're seeing now is a massive growing trend in the recreational sector, nearly every boat has a chiller bag now....If I've only got one chiller bag, I'm only going to be keeping one fish, I will be letting the rest go.”

– Richie Abela (Golden Tuna Charter Operator)

- **What sets a Golden Tuna Charter Operator Apart**
 - In this short segment Richie was asked how important the program is and the significance of charter operators playing a role in stewardship amongst the recreational sector. Admitting that it is a privilege to be recognised/accredited by us for taking care of his clients and fish.

“(Commercial operators) Naturally you would try and get the best product to sell, they set the standard that we (recreational fishers) are trying to get to, so from a recreational point of view we weren't even close. Now, we are getting close to that standard and it is not unachievable.”

– Richie Abela (Golden Tuna Charter Operator)

Ultimate Fishing Expo filming with our ambassadors and engaging with tuna fishers

In February 2023, the Victorian Fisheries Authority (VFA) made waves with the Ultimate Fishing Expo at Melbourne's Convention & Exhibition Centre. Spanning two action-packed days leading up to the World Recreational Fisheries Conference, the event was hailed as a true "extravaganza," showcasing the latest gear and featuring top fishing talent from around the globe. It was pitched to fishers as a must-visit event whether an avid angler or just curious about fishing. Tuna Champions hosted a booth at the event and had extremely high engagement with fishers and distributed a substantial amount of educational material and advice as well as selling a good quantity of branded merchandise.

In addition, the high profile of the event meant that many of our ambassadors based in Victoria were in attendance. This provided a great opportunity for filming content with the Ambassadors as well as working with them to discuss our messaging with the public. In attendance were ambassadors Patrick Dangerfield, Lee Rayner, Paul, Jet and Cristy Worsteling and John and Lydia Cahill. A particularly special opportunity arose to interview international fishing celebrity and actor, Robson Green and discuss the Tuna Champions program.



The Tuna Champions booth at the Ultimate Fishing Expo at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre.



Tuna Champions ambassadors Paul Worsteling and Patrick Dangerfield discuss the impact that the program has had on the recreational fishers with program lead Sean Tracey.

“We are lucky to now have a tuna fishery in Victoria, when I was growing up, we didn’t have tuna in Victoria. So it is very important that we now look after that fishery...I love what Tuna Champions is doing because it is such an easy ethos to follow, it is so simple and it kind of makes me sad we haven’t been doing this all along...You can only eat so much, the yield on a 20kg tuna is huge if you do it properly. You need a lot of ice to look after a fish that size...if you can’t look after the fish properly through not having enough ice, let it go back...I have 1000% seen a difference in the way people care for their catch, it is brilliant to see, the difference is huge.”

– Cristy Worsteling (Tuna Champions ambassador and fishing celebrity)

“I only ever keep what I can deal with, that fish is caught dispatched, bled and straight on an ice slurry... I have seen a change at Portland where the fishers have really embraced if they catch a large tuna bringing it in gilled and gutted to be weighed, that never used to happen...My one tip is if you don’t have the correct gear like chiller bags and ice or if it is too big for what you need for a feed, don’t keep it.”

– Lee Rayner (Tuna Champions ambassador and fishing celebrity)



“It has only been the last few years that I have really understood the process behind really looking after your fish, how a tunas body actually works, how hot they run and that icing and dispatching a fish in an ethical way and also how this preserves it is so important that has really been through the work with Tuna Champs driving that awareness for me as much as anyone. I think the awareness that Tuna Champions has brought to people around looking after their catch is a wonderful thing.”

– Patrick Dangerfield (Tuna Champions Ambassador, Geelong Premiership player and Brownlow Medal winner)

“It has been like being back at school, these are the teachers I wanted, really engaging, accessible and entertaining...you have been reaching the young and old, and males and females... I always say, don't kill a fish you are not going to eat and if you are not going to eat it let it go...I think there is a revolution, if you look after the fish, look after the water it will look after you.”

– Robson Green (Celebrity Fisher and actor)



The amazing underwater photography and videography of Al McGlashan

Professional photographer and Tuna Champions ambassador, Al McGlashan, was once again called upon to capture stunning stock footage of Yellowfin and Bluefin Tuna. Renowned for his expertise, Al specialises in breathtaking underwater shots that showcase the grace and beauty of tuna in their natural habitat. This partnership continues to be a win-win, as we not only highlight his incredible work across our social media channels, but also feature it at talk nights and throughout our online platforms, amplifying both Al's artistry and the Tuna Champions message.

Another beautiful underwater photo showing the grace of a Yellowfin Tuna. This image became a feature on our presentation and flyers during Tuna Champions v2.0 as we were promoting the program to tuna fishers up the east coast of Australia that are more familiar with catching this species than Southern Bluefin Tuna. Photography – Al McGlashan.



These captivating images have become an integral part of the Tuna Champions brand, enriching our design and appearing throughout this report. In addition, we partnered with Al on our Yellowfin Tuna satellite tagging program, with Al and his family graciously hosting us aboard his boat for the mission. During the trip, we successfully deployed a tag, capturing the moment for his exciting new television series, Fish Forever, which aired on Channel Nine and 9Now. This collaboration not only showcased the power of our program but also helped promote the importance of tuna conservation to a wider audience.

A stunning shot of a Yellowfin Tuna getting air born as it free jumps while feeding on a school of bait fish. Photography – Audi Croft.



Cooper McGlashan carefully leads a large Yellowfin Tuna boatside for satellite tagging. Photography – Al McGlashan.

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FISH FOREVER

Special Interest

Al McGlashan's latest instalment Fish Forever showcases the plight our oceans and fisheries are facing. It isn't all doom and gloom, instead it's a story of hope and learning.

[▶ Watch Latest](#)
[Season 1](#)

Latest Episodes [All Episodes >](#)

Ep 7 Earning Our Stripes

23 MIN

Ep 6 Sailfish

22 MIN

Ep 5 Swordfish Revisited

23 MIN

Ep 4 Yellowfin

22 MIN



A beautiful underwater shot highlighting a Yellowfin Tuna hovering above its school as they hunt for food. Photography – Al McGlashan.

Our New Champions

In Tuna Champions v2.0, we welcomed two new ambassadors. Kate Rogers from New South Wales who is a mad keen fisho, that loves looking after her tuna as much as she loves chasing them.



Kate Rogers, one of our newest ambassadors who commonly targets yellowfin on the east coast of New South Wales.

We also welcomed Jarvis Wall from the north coast of Tasmania who is a lifelong fisher that is now making the most of the resurgence of the Southern Bluefin Tuna population and their increasing presence in Bass Strait. An area where they were not known to be caught up until a couple of years ago. Jarvis is leading the charge in educating the fishers on the north coast that might be new to the fishery given the development of this exciting new area for the fishery.



Jarvis Wall is keen to share the Tuna Champions messages among Tasmanian anglers that are potentially new to the tuna fishery with the rapid increase in the abundance of Southern Bluefin Tuna in Bass Strait.



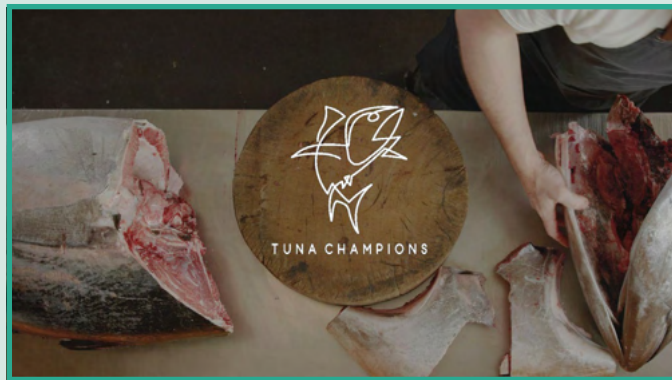
Nathan Brindle – Tuna Champions in the kitchen

In recent years, there's been a surge in interest around alternative cooking methods like meat smoking, ceviche, hibachi grilling, and a revival of age-old preservation techniques such as dry aging and pickling. Alongside this, a growing appreciation for underutilised fish cuts has emerged. Seeing this trend as an opportunity, we wanted to inspire anglers to explore these methods with their tuna, ensuring they make the most of every catch. By thinking beyond traditional preparations like sashimi, sushi, or grilled steaks, fishers can unlock new ways to increase the yield from each tuna, ultimately helping them rethink how many fish are needed for a meal. After all, if one fish can be fully utilised, do you really need to harvest two?

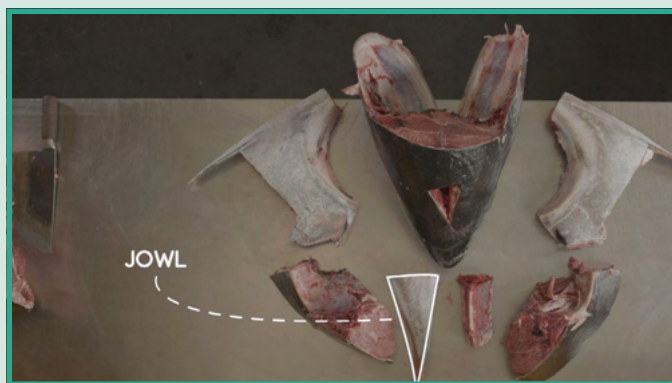
To bring this vision to life, we teamed up with Nathan Brindle, a Tuna Champions ambassador, renowned chef, and MasterChef: The Professionals alum, who is also the Head Chef at Sydney's prestigious Ester restaurant (rated with 15 chef hats by the Australian Food Guide). Together, we created a series of short videos that showcase the versatility of tuna—from preservation methods to creative uses of alternate cuts, and modern twists on beloved classics. The series covered everything from preserving tuna trunk cuts in beeswax to cooking collars and jowls. These videos struck a chord with anglers, providing them with fresh ways to prepare and enjoy their catch.

Throughout the series, we emphasised the importance of handling the fish with care to maximise its meat quality from the moment it's hooked. Filmed by videographer and producer Kit Baker, the rustic, laid-back aesthetic of the videos perfectly matched the ambiance of Ester restaurant, where the series was shot.

The entire series was filmed using a single Southern Bluefin Tuna, weighing in at around 50 kg. Some cuts were prepared immediately after butchering, while others were preserved for weeks, with some even using a sterile "jarring" technique to extend their shelf life for months. The result was a practical and mouthwatering guide to making every tuna catch count.



Tuna Champions ambassador and renowned chef breaking down a Southern Bluefin tuna into a range of different cuts. Some were prepared and cooked immediately some several weeks after with several preservation techniques used.



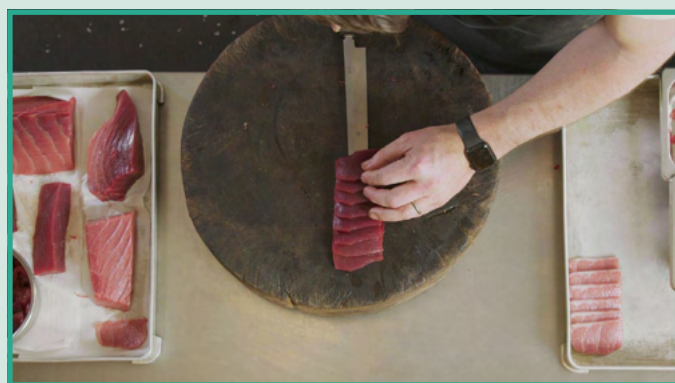
Some of the lesser used cuts of tuna that are exceptional if prepared correctly. Collars, the jowl, head loins and cheeks all have unique characteristics and are often fatty cuts that make them versatile for a range of cooking methods. In this video, Nathan explains the method and benefits of this technique.



Perhaps unusual butchering technique for recreational anglers is cutting trunk sections from a tuna. The most common butchering method is usually removing the fillets of the fish. By sectioning the trunk of the fish and leaving the skin on is an excellent preservation technique. This method reduces the exposure of the flesh to air and moisture which are the main causes of fish spoilage over time. A trunked section can last several weeks in a cold or dry environment if prepared in a sanitary way.



In this video ([link](#)), Nathan showcases how great some of the common cuts can look and taste with the right dispatching and butchering techniques but also adds the meat from scraping the meat with a spoon from the skeleton. Reducing waste, increasing yield and a source of meat that can be used in a range of ways.



While the butchered fish is still fresh, Nathan uses some of the prime traditional cuts to make exquisite contemporary takes on the traditional preparation of un-cooked tuna.



Dry ageing beef and other terrestrial based meats has become very popular in recent years but also turns back the clock to a time before easy access to cold storage, in particular freezing. In this episode ([ep](#) and [youtube link](#)), Nathan walks us through several different ageing techniques and explains how long each will last. Again, notice the non-tradition cuts with bones in and skin on, treating the fish more like traditional butchery more commonly associated with terrestrial animals.



Here Nathan uses a non-traditional cooking method and blow torches the dry aged tuna loin to create a beautiful caramelisation for a dish.



Another contemporary take lending from the preparation of terrestrial meat dishes. Here Nathan has created a bone on fillet from the dry aged tuna. The marrow and flavours from the bone adding a flavoursome twist to the traditional method of cooking a fresh filleted steak in a pan. This dish was prepared on a Hibachi grill. A relatively cheap and simple tool to add a new angle and flavour profile to cooking any meat.



Finally, Nathan preserved some of the tuna in jars. This is a far more tasty and personal preparation of canned tuna (such as that purchased at the supermarket). Here however, a preference of flavour profiles can be added, and if the method is done properly this form of preservation can last for up to a year. Check out our collaboration with Little Tuna to see our own jars and system to preserve your own tuna using the jarring technique. While needing to purchase a canning pressure-cooking utensil, the cost is offset by having a ready to grab snack or meal on the shelf whenever you desire. A dish that needs to have the name added and the episode and YouTube link added.

This series of videos with our ambassador Nathan, is a great highlight of how many diverse meals can be prepared from a single tuna if dispatched, prepared and preserved properly. It may take some time, but it is worth it!

All the videos and more can be found on the Tuna Champions YouTube channel:
www.youtube.com/@tunachampions3406

Ebbtide Tackle and XXL Boga lip grips

Andy Smith from Ebb Tide and Tackle has been a proud supporter of the program since its inception. The store stocks these heavy-duty lip grips which allow fishers to control large Tuna boatside. The product is critical at ensuring a healthy release for large fish and therefore, we promote the product and Ebb Tide and Tackle as stockists.

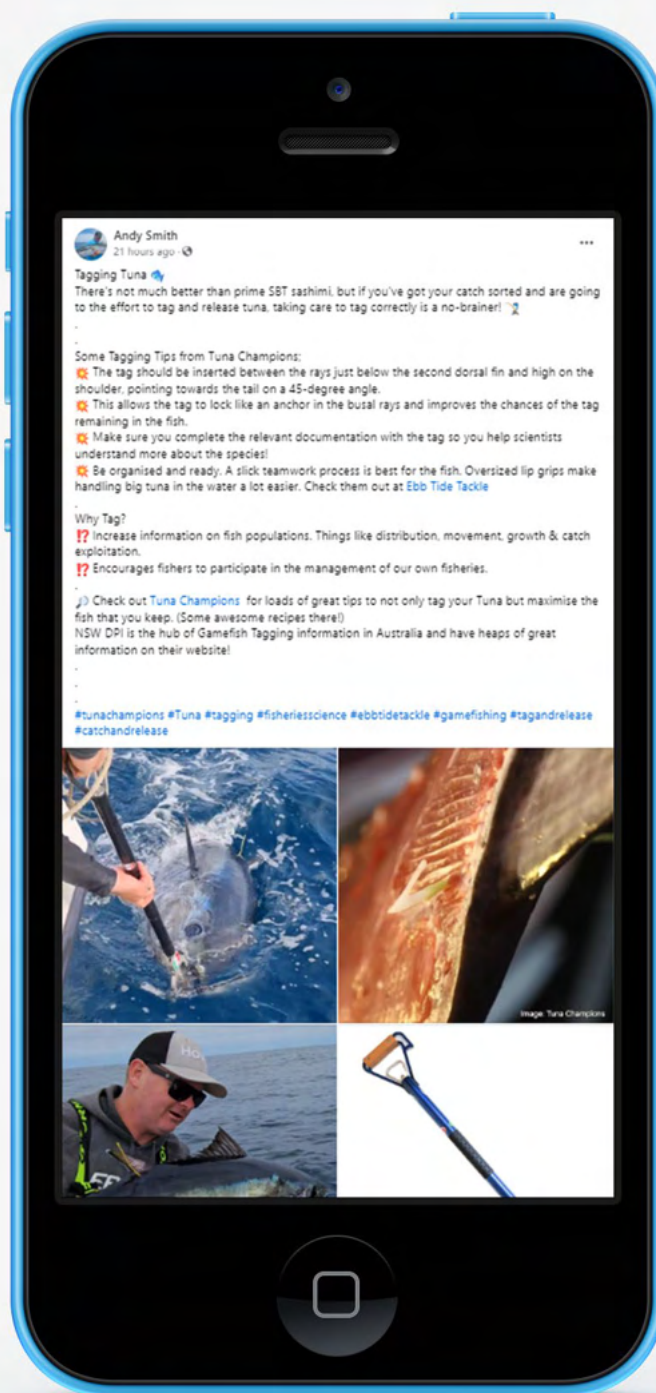
This is another example of how a message transcends brands, teams and people. Our Golden Charter Operators, Richie Abela and Tyson Kain are big advocates of these Boga lip grips to maximise the chance of survival of the XXL Southern Bluefin Tuna that their clients catch and release. Reducing the physical damage to a fish by not using a lip hook reduces the chance of mortality through infection or excessive bleeding.

A large Southern Bluefin Tuna being towed gently boatside with a large set of Boga lip grips to allow it to recover by gently moving water through its gills as it rests after being retrieved to the boat. Also note the good tag placement under the second dorsal fin. Tagging fish of this size is a great contribution to science with a lot of information gathered if the fish is recaptured and the tag details recorded.



A set of Boga lip grips, available from EbbTide tackle ([Website link](#)). The perfect tool to handle any large fish boatside if you are planning to release. Less damage and more control of the fish, win-win.

Andy often posts on the messaging of Tuna Champions. Aligning the strategies for better meat quality or reduced impact on the fish if releasing with the equipment he sells through his store. Another example of reciprocal benefit with our ambassadors. Andy benefits from the positive affiliation of promoting and selling tools for responsible fishing practices and we share Andy's posts on the Tuna Champions communication platforms. This is also an excellent example of the sector, including the tackle industry, taking carriage of the Tuna Champions ethos, an important step to behavioural change.



An example of an Ebbtide social media post sharing the Tuna Champions messaging.

Our website is the heart of Tuna Champions' educational efforts, serving as the go-to hub for all the resources, communications, and messages developed through the program. Hosted at tunachampions.com.au, it's designed to connect with and engage our primary audience—recreational tuna fishers. The goal is to make this site the ultimate information destination for anyone interested in learning more about tuna, tuna fishing, and even discovering Golden Tuna Charter operators. These charter services not only offer top-tier fishing experiences but also give anglers the chance to bring home high-quality tuna meat, making it a must-visit resource for anyone seeking to enhance their fishing journey.

New look for TC v2.0

The website has been redeveloped in TC v2.0 to make it more visually appealing, with accessible, dynamic content and specifically targeted to the primary audience of recreational fishers. We utilise the photography of ambassador Al McGlashan throughout the website. We have also now broadened the information available on the site to include information about a range of tuna species.

The landing page of our website showing the menus of information that can be accessed and using the timeless underwater photography of ambassador, Al McGlashan.



About Tuna

The 'About Tuna' page provides basic fact-based information on the biology of several key tuna species. This builds the foundation knowledge for fishers which improves the retention of, 'why it is important to care for our catch'. Information for each species includes lifespan, reproduction, migratory path, and maximum size.



The 'About Tuna' page on the Tuna Champions website, showing the tiles that can be clicked to learn more about commonly caught tuna species by recreational fishers in Australia.

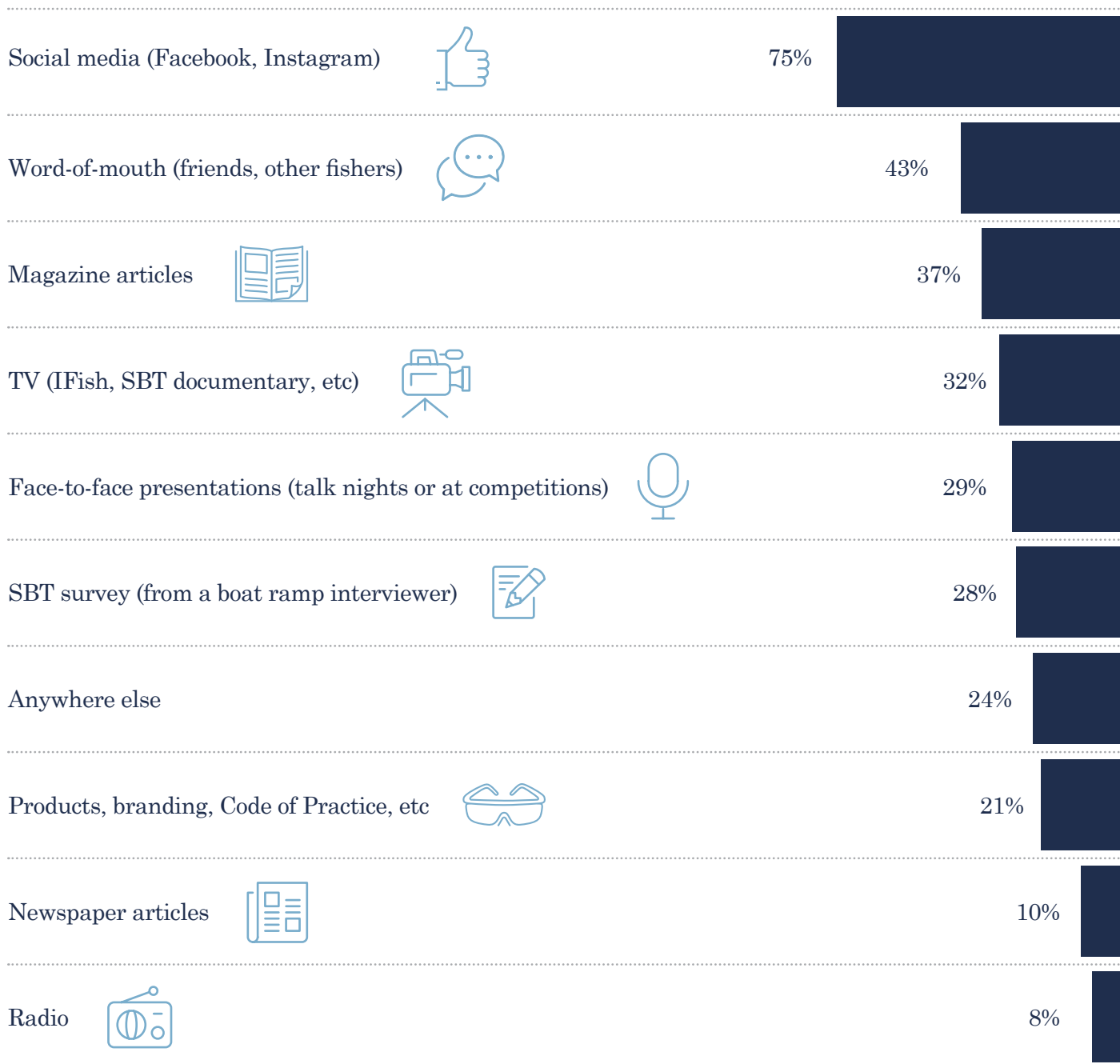


An example of the information available when you click into a specific species on the 'About Tuna' page of the Tuna Champions website. The information is designed to be simple and digestible, with links to the Status of Australian Fish Stocks (SAFS) page where a deeper understanding of the fish and the fisheries in which it is caught in Australia can be found.

REFINING OUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Social media provided the best reach to our target audience during TC v1.0, followed by word-of-mouth (evidence of snowballing and social sanctioning), magazine articles, television appearances on fishing shows and face-to-face interactions at talk nights and events (Tracey, Cleary et al. 2023).

We have focused the communication strategy in TC v2.0 on these areas and weighted towards the ones that provided the most success. We continued with all mediums however as it is likely that different methods connect with different demographics in the fishery.



The percentage of survey respondents that had heard of the Tuna Champions program across a range of different communication mediums (multiple responses were allowed).

Social media has become an essential tool for modern communication, and its impact on spreading the word about Tuna Champions has been undeniable. The National Recreational Fishing Survey for Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT) revealed that social media was the most common way people learned about the program (Tracey, Cleary et al. 2023). One of the most effective ways we've expanded our reach is by tapping into the vast social media followings of our ambassadors. When selecting our ambassadors, we prioritise not only their sizable audience but also the fact that they engage with fishers who are actively involved in the fisheries we aim to target—especially those involved in game fishing and tuna fishing specifically.

Our key social media strategy focuses on:

- **Being active on the sites**, including posting useful, interesting content and valuable insights that align with the Tuna Champion ethic and key messages, and sharing appropriate posts and links from other entities
- **Monitoring and listening to conversations** to identify issues and follow up on opportunities to connect with recreational fishers
- **Actively managing comments and complaints** in a friendly, understanding and professional manner –consistent monitoring, including during weekends, will be in place to manage the risk of contentious issues escalating or mis-information spreading

Social media presents both an opportunity and challenge for programs that require exposure and knowledge diffusion through small scale communities to global scales. There are many opinions on the most effective way to manage and utilise these social media for optimal outreach, however, due to its organic nature, strategies are often reviewed to truly develop the most effective means of communication (Gupta, 2023).

In recent years, Facebook has been one of the main social media platforms for communication, however, more recently, Instagram has emerged as the leading platform for users with well over 200 million people utilising the application daily (Gupta, 2023). Tuna Champions v1.0 relied heavily on Facebook as the primary means of social media communication, particularly as it allows for a short amount of text to be included with imagery where our messages can be conveyed. During the 2021 Covid-19 Global Pandemic, Instagram released a feature called 'Instagram Reels'. This feature was designed to replicate Tik Tok and provided users with access to short, less than ninety second, videos that were categorised based on the topic of the clip. This algorithm saw short clips, with trending audio streamed and shared across the platform and greatly increased the utility of the platform to convey messages not from text but from narrated or direct to camera video clips.

Tuna Champions utilised this service by creating short reels that reached over 350,000 users per reel. This increased our monthly engagement to over 100,000 users per month as well as our following.



One of the common misconceptions surrounding social media is that an increased frequency of posts will equal an increased following, although, this is not always the case. In a study conducted by Romero-Jara et al, (2024) it was found that frequency was not the key driver for audience engagement, rather the quality of the content being shared. Using similar strategic goals to this study, Tuna Champions aimed to share quality content 3-4 times a week rather than posting daily where key messages may be overlooked.

Stories were also used to conduct weekly quizzes which highlighted how well people were absorbing our key messages. Stories were also used for a more personal connection to followers, showing what the brand has been doing, where we are travelling to and perhaps what others are doing who have tagged us or are showcasing our ethos.

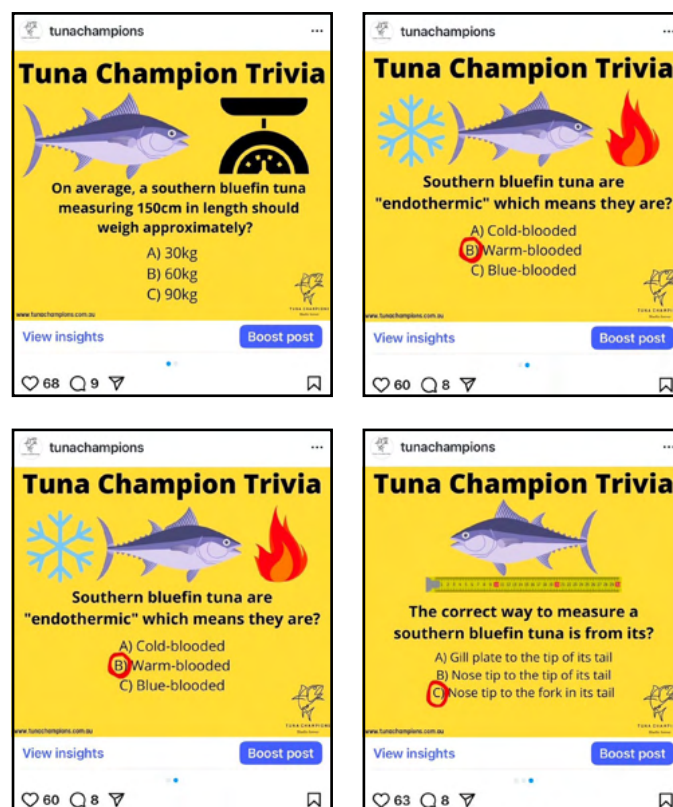
It became clear that due to the uptake of the Tuna Champions Ethos less authentic posting is required as the number of shared posts to our account has increased. This includes stories, tagged images, and collaborated photos. This is a clear indication of the willingness to spread the Tuna Champions message amongst fishers and evidence of snowballing of our message from within the target community of recreational fishers. As well as this, it demonstrates our popularity as a program amongst fishers as their aim is to have their content shared on our media highlighted the programs approval of their efforts which we could reinforce through sharing these efforts.

Lastly, using the collaboration feature on Instagram proved beneficial to increase our exposure throughout the course of the program. This allowed us to reach new audiences using the followings of others.

“100% correct Richie, I’ve certainly learned in a short time how important it is to care for tuna post-catch and the huge difference it makes, bring on the 2023 season. I best be buying a chill bag.”

– Renee Edwards, Angler

The success of the communications and engagement program is based on standard metrics of engagement through social media analytics and tracking. These analytics give us a good understanding of which messages are getting the most traction amongst the target audience and allow us to tailor our communications to ensure that the key messages are being received.



Facebook

The Tuna Champions Facebook following has increased to over 17,600 people. The page has been reconstructed to include more tuna species, new branding, and an easier link through to the information hub (website).

The success of the communications and engagement program is measured through standard metrics of engagement through web traffic and social media analytics and tracking. These analytics will give us a good understanding of which messages are getting the most traction amongst the target audience and allow us to tailor our communications to ensure that the key messages are being received.

Key features

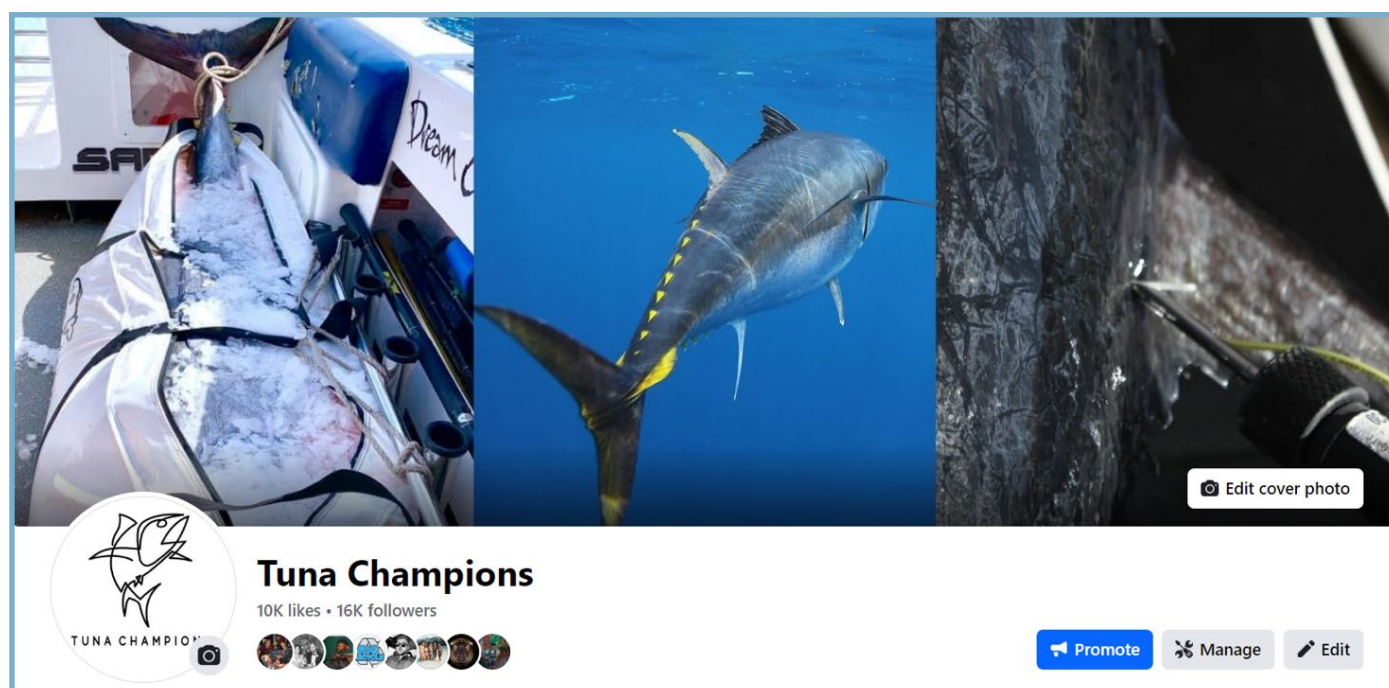
The Tuna Champions online presence has grown substantially over the course of the second iteration of the program. Reaching over 6.9M people on Facebook, the account has targeted audiences both within Australia and overseas. Interestingly, a byproduct of our online education has been the accessibility for other countries such as the United States of America making up nearly 15%

of our online audience. As Tuna are a migratory species this interest from other countries could be attributed to our expansion to all species such as Yellowfin expanding our geographical range. Nearly doubling our monthly growth in followers over the course of the V2 of the program has shown the organic nature of the online accounts adapting with trends and the value of exponential growth when you have mutually beneficial relationships with ambassadors and other key supporters of the program.

"A huge change and positive increase! Fishers maximising their catch with improved handling and care techniques. Fish looked after and processed better, delivering a better-quality meal and increased options of presentation! Plus, a huge change in catch and release, improved handling and care to minimise damage to fish for release. Bluewater sized Fish Grips, knotless nets for school fish, single hooks! It's been a massive win for fishers and tuna across Australia so far...Keep the fantastic message going!"

— Andy Smith, Tuna Champions Ambassador and Director of Ebb Tide and Tackle

The Facebook cover image incorporates powerful imagery on catch and keep, catch and release and appropriate tagging techniques for tuna.

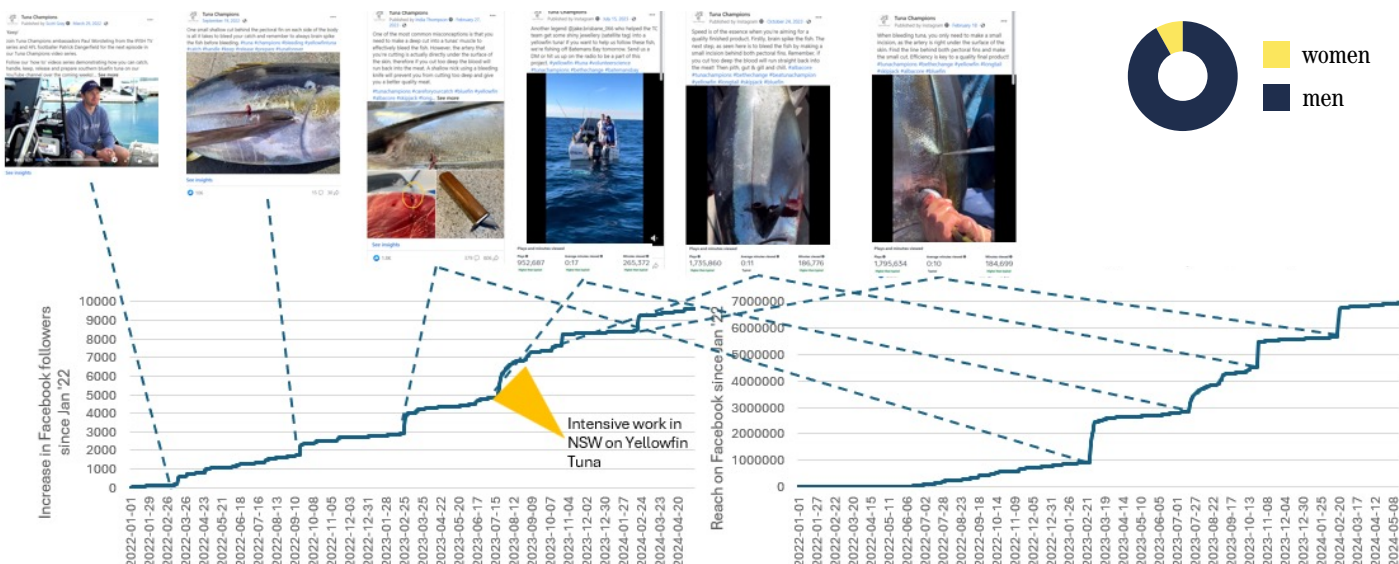


The Facebook page has had 57.2K people visits, either through search or shared content. This statistic shows the content shared or our program is of value to nearly 60,000 people as they have followed our lead to find further information. This demand is than reflected in the high-level interactions that have occurred through the content shared, such as reels.

“I’ve seen an increase in information shared in the game fishing community about catch care to reduce harm and increase quality of filets. I’ve certainly learned heaps and it has changed how we prepare for a trip out and handle our fish for the better.”

– Kate Daley, Angler

The Facebook post with the highest engagement, reaching over 1.5 million users, showed the location of the artery that is severed when bleeding a fish. This image was accompanied by information to explain that this is why the cut to bleed a tuna only needs to be shallow. There were many comments stating that people were unaware of this, and tended to cut deeply which then affects the meat quality as blood pools in the deeper cut and reduces the amount of usable meat due to the physical damage and the quality of the meat overall through ineffective exsanguination.



Facebook

17,732 followers
May 2024

v1.0=▲ 189 / month

v2.0=▲ 333 / month

Stats for Tuna Champions v2.0

31/12/2022–17/05/2024

9.7k increase in followers

57.2k page visits

6.9M accounts reached

all organic (no paid promotion)



The Facebook post with the greatest reach from the Tuna Champions page detailed how to bleed a fish properly. The uptake in this key messaging is evidence of information that many thought worthy of sharing as it was new knowledge to them and they wanted to share it with their peers. A further example of the recreational fishing sector adopting the principals of Tuna Champions and disseminating the information organically among themselves – snowballing the message towards a stewardship-driven behavioural change within the fishery.

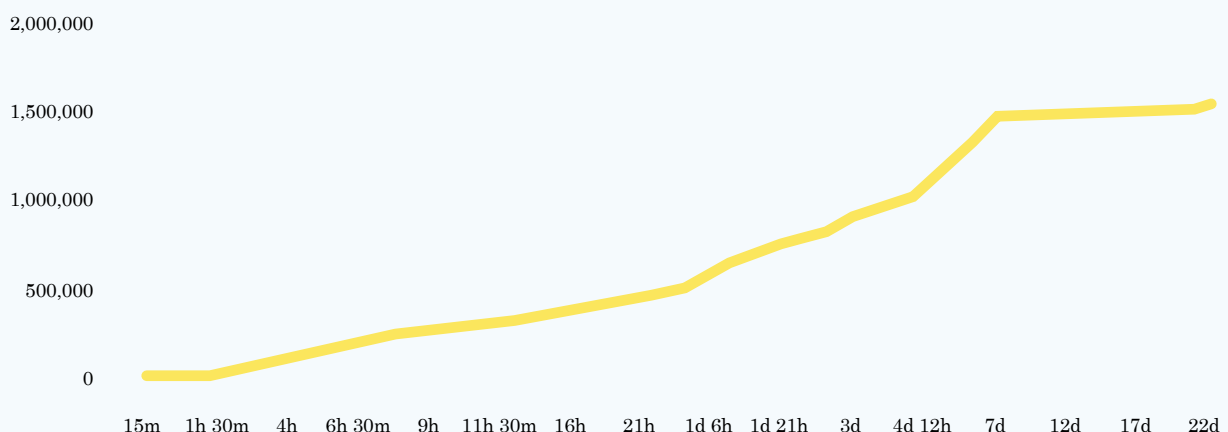
1,262 post comments

802 post shares

9,270 post reactions

1,555,265 post reach

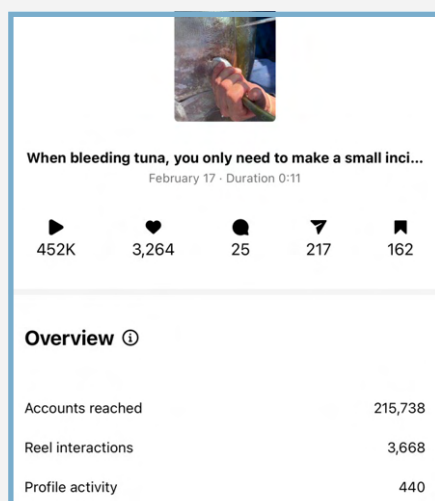
▲ higher than typical (typically 2,184–7,072)



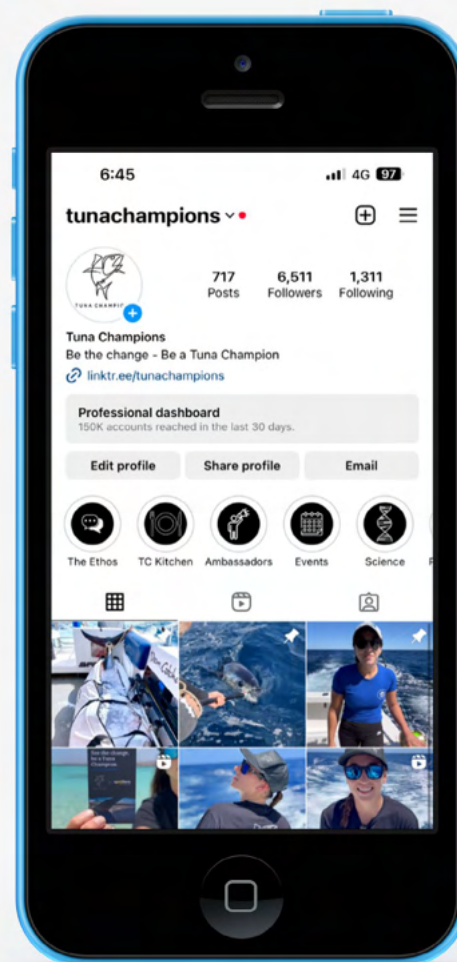
Instagram

Our Instagram followers have doubled in the last 12 months, currently over 7,200 followers. We have focused on producing 'reels' for the page, as the most popular form of post on the platform, but also recycling our core content but weaving in the posts of others that are tagging us when adhering to the Tuna Champions ethos in their photos and posts. The pride in their posts to be showcasing responsible tuna fishing practices and the fact they tag us with the intent of us sharing their posts is evidence of the gravitas of the program. Further, it moves the program towards a self-sustaining model where we can primarily facilitate the positive affirmation and showcasing of our ethos from within the fishery by sharing follower posts that meet our criteria for demonstrating the core messages of the program – perpetuating the momentum of the snowball effect towards behavioural change, but also improving the cost efficiency of the program as we move towards a leaner financial program and Not-For-Profit status.

The most engaging Instagram post was displaying the bleeding process for tuna. The 11 second video shows a small albacore being bled and had over a quarter of a million views and was responsible for an additional 1,000 followers to the page.



The insights summary of a 'reel' from the Tuna Champions Instagram page that reached over 452,000 people. The reel was an educational video on how to properly and effectively bleed tuna.



The Tuna Champions Instagram landing view.

Key features

Instagram has become the dominant platform for younger social media users in recent years. The organic nature of the program sees the account utilising modern features such as reels to improve exposure and growth. This has seen the platform nearly double its follower growth to 176 people per month. In addition to this there is over 1.3 million accounts that have been reached during the V2 period.

It is important to note that all growth is organic as no paid promotions were utilised over the course of the program. This is evident as the spikes of growth can be attributed to reels that have been shared.

One of the benefits of utilising social media as a form of education and reach is reaching other engaged users as a byproduct of your intended

targeted audience. An example of this is 10% of engaged users were from the United States of America, followed by New Zealand. This positive output shows our resources are still focused on Australia but are flowing outside of our current geographical focus.

“We have an ice slurry ready b4 gathering bait not just for tuna but for any old fish. Always remember the old fisho next door throwing a wet hessian bag over the fish for the day how things have changed!! Love fish, love well looked after fish better!”

– Brad White (Recreational Fisher)

“Heading out tomorrow, and wouldn’t go if I wasn’t prepared to keep a fish if I choose to land one, ice, bags, processing, I feel people are planning better rather than working it out after the catch.”

– Jason McGiveron (Recreational Fisher)

Social Sanctioning

Performance Indicators achieved:

- **Increasing engagement of grass roots fishers and demonstrated uptake of the key messages of the education and engagement program.**

Measuring momentum and impact in a tangible form can be difficult when observing behavioural change. Although social media is great for measuring reach it can also be a useful resource to determine the impact of the messaging your program is sharing through comments made on posts on the platforms.

Personal norms are expectations by an individual on how to behave in certain situations (Stensland and Aas 2014). Social norms are

external influences such as groups, that have the potential to self-correct or shape behaviours (Stensland and Aas 2014). Prior to the creation of the TC program, the standards as to which a recreational fisher should care for their catch were considered the bare minimum. This personal norm was acceptable amongst society due to the lack of understanding amongst fishers. Post Tuna Champions, the social norms have changed amongst fishers and most notably online.

Leaving fish on the deck, whole, with no ice was a common practice. This is considered unacceptable behaviour and is often shamed online. If correct practices are not followed, fishers are often referred to our program using a mention application.

This acceptance of responsible fishing practises has created a social movement so driven, it removes the onus on our program and sees fishers calling out bad behaviour rather than TC taking on the role as a moderator. This social sanctioning has become more prevalent in iteration two of TC, as the education and awareness surrounding caring for your catch becomes more available and accessible through our program.



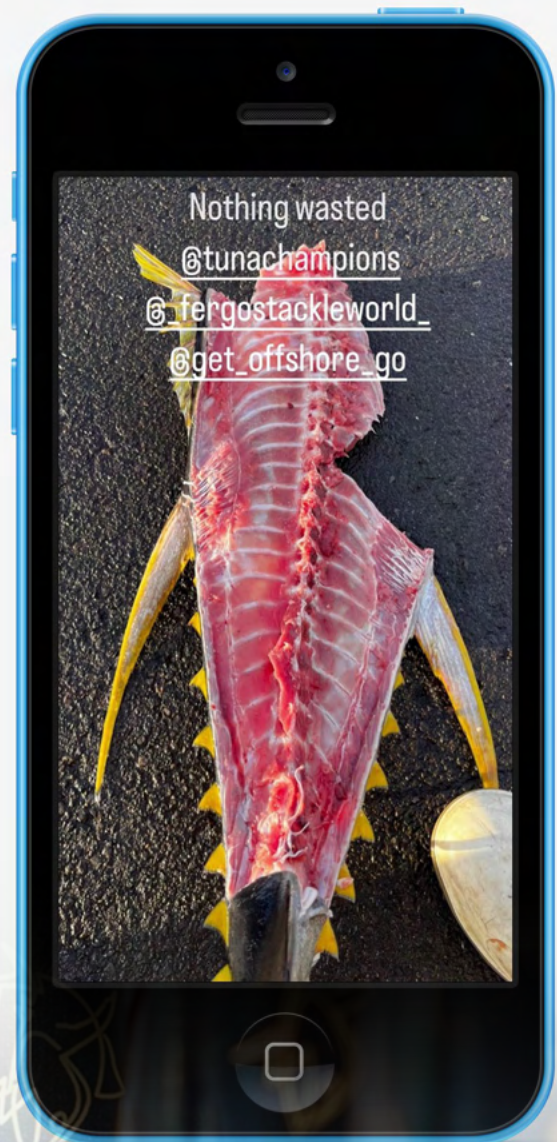
Evidence of Change

“For the Calcutta, heaviest fish needs to be a minimum of 780mm in fork length, but in-line with Tuna Champions best practice, is to be gutted and gilled and in an ice slurry.”

– Steve Toome – Port Lincoln Classic

“Every fish, no matter the size will count for the shootout, which will prevent little fish being landed, handled and measured as they can be released in the water.”

– Steve Toome – Port Lincoln Classic



Targeted seminars, information sessions and public events

To maximise exposure to our core audience of recreational game fishers, we organised a series of seminars and information sessions. We focused on fishing competitions for key tuna species, tackle stores, and game fishing club talk nights, ensuring we reached the right people where they gather. Our goal was not only to promote the Tuna Champions program but also to expand our audience and increase engagement. Each presentation at these events is carefully crafted to deliver our key educational messages, while also encouraging two-way communication. This allows us to clear up any misunderstandings and address any misinformation, ensuring our message resonates clearly and accurately.

Port Hacking Game Fishing Club (Port Hacking, NSW; 13th of October, 2022)

The Tuna Champions Ethos presentation was a resounding success, drawing an enthusiastic crowd of 70 attendees. The event not only sparked great interest but also saw a strong demand for our merchandise, which sold well. The positive reception from the audience highlighted the impact of the presentation and the growing support for our mission.



Sydney Game Fishing Club (Sydney, NSW; 14th of October, 2022)

This presentation attracted 40 attendees, all of whom engaged deeply with the content. The session sparked valuable discussions, including ideas around modifying tournament rules for future tuna fishing competitions, showing a strong interest in evolving practices to align with our program's goals.



Presentation at IGFA General Meeting Sydney (Sydney, NSW; 28th July, 2022)

This meeting was a huge success. We presented Tuna Champions to the Oceania Regional Committee and was approached by Jason Schratwieser to discuss collaboration opportunities with the International Game Fishing Association. Jason is currently the president of the association and was previously the director of the conservation division.

In addition, the New Zealand representatives have expressed their interest in having Tuna Champions attend their AGM to showcase our work in Australia and potentially expand.

Sydney Boat Show (Sydney, NSW; 29th - 31st of July, 2022)

Physical presence at the show and filming content with potential ambassadors whilst identifying collaboration opportunities.

On Saturday we met with *The Captain* magazine and arranged a regular column for TC.

Australian Fishing Tackle Association (AFTA) Trade Show (Gold Coast, QLD; 5th -7th August, 2022)

The Australian Fishing Tackle Association is one of the largest fishing events in the calendar year. Including two days of trade, a public day and a networking gala dinner.

India presented to the Women in Recreational Fishing Network about social media and Tuna champions engagement strategies.

Over the course of the three days, discussions were held with a variety of people and companies surrounding Tuna Champions, our ethos and our plans in the near future.

For example, Rapala were welcoming and supportive of TC and have agreed to promote and share TC content across social media platforms.



Game Fishing Club of Northern Tasmania (Launceston, Tasmania; 13th August, 2022)

The Tuna Champions presentation on fish release practices and improving survivability was delivered to 80 attendees and was met with a positive response. The session sparked interest and led to an invitation for a return visit, where we'll present a more in-depth talk at a future talk night. As part of the event, we handed out donated merchandise to attendees to boost the visibility of our branding and further spread our message to the wider community.

“Approach India Thompson mate (Jason Mcgiveron), she had done a fantastic info presentation at the GFCNT dinner a couple of years ago.”

– Todd Bakes (Recreational Fisher)



AGFEST (Carrick, Tasmania; 24th – 27th of August, 2022)

This event brings in large crowds in excess of 50,000 people of which many recreationally fish. Although it is not a direct target market, our attendance in the recreational fisheries hub was greatly appreciated and showed our capacity to work with peak bodies such as Tarfish.

New Zealand Sportsfishing Council AGM (Online; 24th of September, 2022)

A presentation was given to the committee via zoom that discussed Tuna Champions, who we are and what we do. At the end of the presentation a vote was taken as to whether TC should do a tour of NZ next year to which 80% of the room were in support. Minister for Ocean and Fisheries David Parker was in attendance.



Coast 2 Coast (Victor Harbor, South Australia; 10th-12th of February, 2023)

Tuna Champions attended the Coast 2 Coast Tuna Tournament in Victor Harbour SA. With over 60 boats competing we had a quick brief about the competition to all entrants and a stall set up for the two days. We sold merchandise to fishers as well as having important discussions about caring for your catch and collecting social media content.

“The Coast 2 Coast Tuna tournament has undergone significant changes in the past decade. It’s almost like wishing I had invested in shares of chiller bags considering their soaring demand!”

– Carla Roguemoore, Angler



The Ultimate Fishing Expo (Melbourne, Victoria; 18th-19th of February, 2023)

The Victorian Fisheries Authority held an expo for recreational fishers at the convention centre in Melbourne. With an attendance of over 10,000 fishers on the first day it was an incredibly fruitful event. Tuna Champions had a stall near the main stage where ambassadors such as Paul Worsteling, Patrick Dangerfield and Lee Rayner making appearances throughout the course of the weekend.

The guest appearances displayed the value of the ambassadors with queues of people lining up to both meet the personalities and hear more about the program.



World Recreational Fishing Conference (Melbourne, Victoria; 20th-23rd of February, 2023)

The World Recreational Fishing Conference presented an opportunity for the program to showcase its capacity in the field of stewardship to contribute to improving the recreational fishing sector. A 15 minute presentation was given to highlight the incredible success of the program.



Poseidon Game Fishing Club (Melbourne, Victoria; 1st of April, 2023)

With over 100 people in attendance this was one of the largest club talks. The reception was incredible with many people approaching and messaging beyond the talk night date asking for further information and applying the Tuna Champions principles. The reception was so positive that nearly \$2000 in merchandise was sold on the night.



Tuna Club of Tasmania (Eaglehawk Neck, Tasmania; 25th April, 2023)

We presented on best handling practices to over 120 attendees prior to the Australian Bluefin Championships.



Exmouth Game Fishing Club (Exmouth, Western Australia; 28th April, 2023)

Although a smaller attendance the reception was welcomed and ideally future talks should be held later in the season during the run of larger yellowfin.

Warrnambool Offshore & Light Game Fishing Club (Warrnambool, Victoria; 15th June, 2023)

This presentation was held when larger bluefin were beginning to run in both Portland and Port Macdonell and attracted 40 attendees. The session was well-received, with a strong turnout and a successful evening of merchandise sales, further boosting our presence and spreading the message.



Batemans Bay Game Fishing Club (Batemans Bay, NSW; 1st of July, 2023)

With 60 in attendance this was a hugely successful event with word of mouth spreading upon the completion of the talk and requests to attend neighbouring clubs. Many concepts were raised during the night surrounding the dispatching of fish and in particular the reasoning behind taking large amounts of fish. Post the talk there was an general consensus that the effort required to produce a high quality product may mean taking less fish but a greater result on your plate.



Sydney Game Fishing Club (Sydney, NSW; 4th of July, 2023)

Welcomed back after a previous successful talk with over 60 in attendance and \$1000 sold in merchandise. Further discussions about branding a Tuna Champions tournament for 2024 which requires all fish to be weighed as an 'eating quality' fish.

"This is the largest talk night we have had at the club!"

– Karen Wright, President Sydney Game Fishing Club

Port Hacking Game Fishing Club (Port Hacking, NSW; 6th July 2023)

Welcomed back to present after the success of the previous year with over 40 in attendance, selling nearly \$1000 in merchandise for the night.



Port Stephens Game Fishing Club (Port Stephens, NSW; 3rd July, 2023)

Tuna Champions caring for your catch presentation to over 80 club members. Merchandise was sold at this talk with over \$1000 worth of product sold on the night.



Perth Game Fishing Club (Perth, WA; 27th July, 2023)

Tuna Champions presentation to over 100 attendees at the junior Tuna tournament.

Port MacDonnell Game Fishing Club (Port MacDonnell, SA; 1st of December, 2023)

Tuna Champions caring for your catch presentation to club members with over 60 people in attendance. Merchandise was sold at this talk to the value of \$3000.

“Port MacDonnell Offshore Angling Club just held there 43rd Tuna and Sport Fish tournament. One of the biggest competitions in Australia. Recent changes included 1000 points for tag and release barrels, changes to single hooks only, captured fish only to be presented and weighed gilled and gutted, chiller on site for competitors to use and most fish were all presented in fish bags with plenty of ice. The club also had fish bags for sale.”

– Mark Wahn (Club Member and Talk Night Attendee)

Coast 2 Coast Tournament (Victor Harbour, SA; 8th –10th of February, 2024)

Tuna Champions Caring for your catch presentation to over 200 attendees. Merchandise was also sold over the course of the two days.



World Fisheries Congress (Seattle, USA, 5th March, 2024)

A presentation titled ‘Tuna Champions - Education and Communications Program to Improve Fishing Practices for Tuna’ was delivered to the ‘Management of recreational fisheries accounting for social benefits, economic value, and biological sustainability’ session to a full room. Highlighting the interest in successful recreational stewardship program from an international audience.

The abstract – *The Tuna Champions project is an education and communication program aimed at recreational fishers in Australia who target commonly caught Tuna species including Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT), Yellowfin Tuna, Longtail Tuna and Albacore Tuna. It is the first project of this magnitude in Australia, with the ambitious objective of influencing significant behavioural change in a national fishery. The project is an exemplar of a scientific organisation working with a national peak body to engage a grassroots community, to convey fact-based information that will improve the utilisation of Australia and the world’s natural resources. The project communicates the best methods for catching and handling Tuna, whether the intention is to retain or release the fish. The science behind best fishing practices for Tuna is communicated through a range of strategies to ensure a deep reach into the target audience. The focus is to encourage stewardship and respect for the species within the sector. Since the project began in mid-2018, the project team has engaged with recreational fishers across Australia and the world. The success of the project is evident in the positive response across government, industry and the recreational fishing community – from fishers becoming Tuna Champions who encourage their peers to use best practice fishing methods, to game fishing tournament organisers who are changing competition rules to align with the Tuna Champion ethos. This project clearly demonstrates how building strong partnerships, positive*

community engagement, and leading an effective science-based education program can influence a change in attitudes and behaviours.



Port Lincoln Boat Show (Port Lincoln, Australia, 7th March, 2024)

Short presentation to 85 attendees as well as merchandise sales.



Port Lincoln Tuna Classic (Port Lincoln, SA; 8th –10th of March, 2024)

Tuna Champions Caring for your catch presentation to over 200 attendees. Merchandise was also sold over the course of the two days.



Sunshine Coast Game Fishing Club (Sunshine Coast, QLD; 20th March, 2024)

Tuna Champions presentation to the club with over 50 attendees and \$500 in merchandise sold.

“A big thank you to the Tuna Champions team for coming to the Kawana Waters Hotel last Week and giving us lessons on how to handle our tuna species, whether we are tagging or preparing them for the table.”

– Sunshine Coast Gamefishing Club



International Game Fishing Association Presentation (Sydney, NSW; 27th April, 2024)

The Tuna Champions presentation was highlighting what the program has achieved in Australia over the last 5 years. The presentation was well received with interest from the IGFA to support the program.



“At a recent IGFA Oceania Regional Council meeting in Sydney, Indy delivered a presentation on Tuna Champions. Her enthusiasm and knowledge should not be missed. Great opportunity for juniors to interact with this very talented angler and researcher. 10/10.”

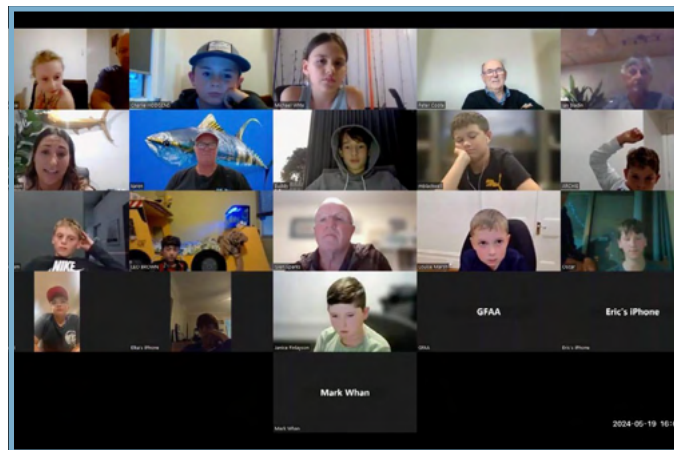
– Peter Cox (Treasurer, Game Fishing Association of Australia)

St Helens District High School (St Helens, Tasmania; 16th May, 2024)

The school aquaculture class was presented the program and a short seminar on the best handling practices for tuna. There were over 30 in attendance.

Game Fishing Association of Australia (Online; 19th May, 2024)

A Tuna Champions presentation designed to educate young anglers over zoom about caring for their catch. The presentation went for an hour with over 30 young attendees.



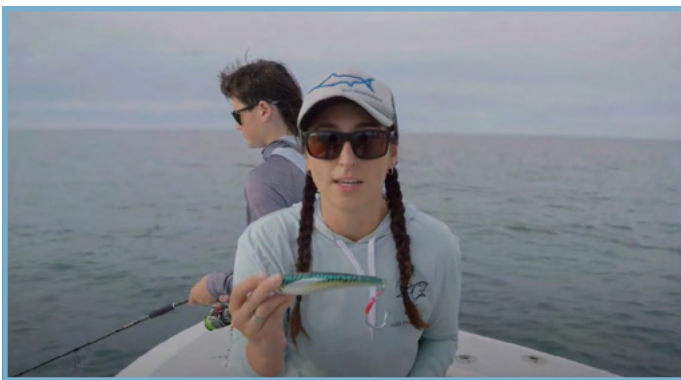
UK scientists, UK Angler Alliance and members of the UK Tuna Association and CHART project (30th April, 2024)

Tuna Champions were invited to present the Program to a group of research scientists from Plymouth University, Exeter University, the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom as well as member of the Recreational Angling Alliance of the United Kingdom.

Television and online visual mediums (i.e. You Tube)

A series of engaging short videos was created for several common tuna species, designed for YouTube and further shared by our champions of change through their social and online media platforms.

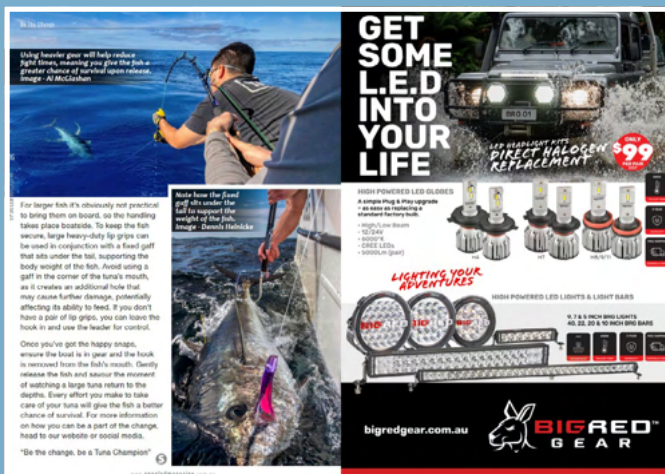
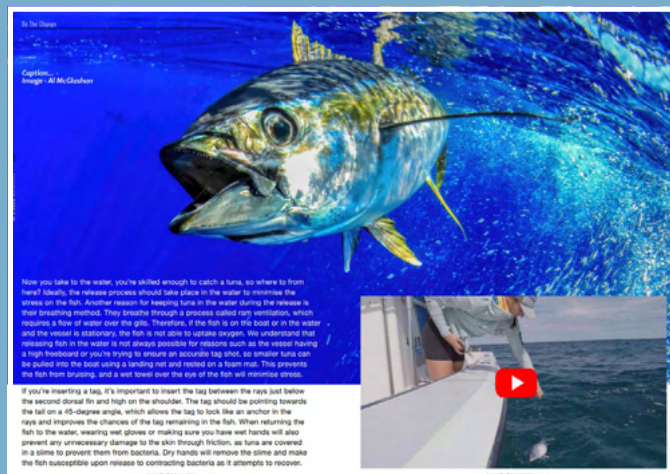
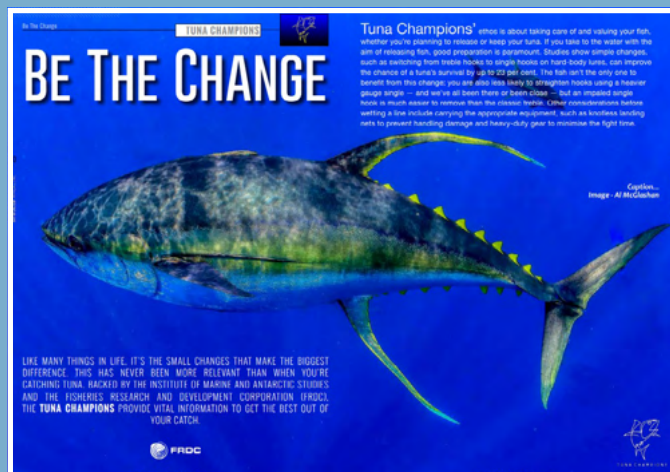
Hosted by prominent fishing personalities and the project team, these videos delivered impactful messages aligned with the program's core principles: catch, handle, keep, release, and prepare.



A series of magazine articles were prepared by the project team and champions of change, focusing on the program's key messages. These articles were aimed at high-readership fishing magazines, such as *The Captain* and *Spooled*.

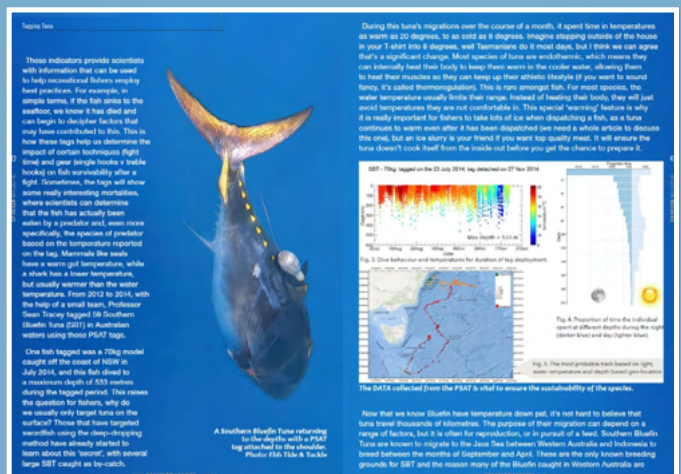
Spooled Magazine Winter Issue 2023 (2nd July, 2023)

An introductory article explaining the Tuna Champions program, what we do, who we are and some key messaging.



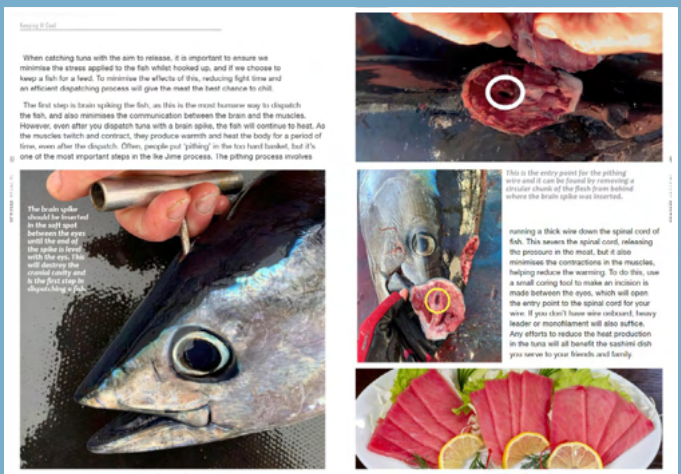
Spoiled Magazine Spring Issue 2023 (20th September, 2023)

This article explains the science behind the educational information we share to recreational fishers. This includes satellite tagging and fish movements and behaviours.



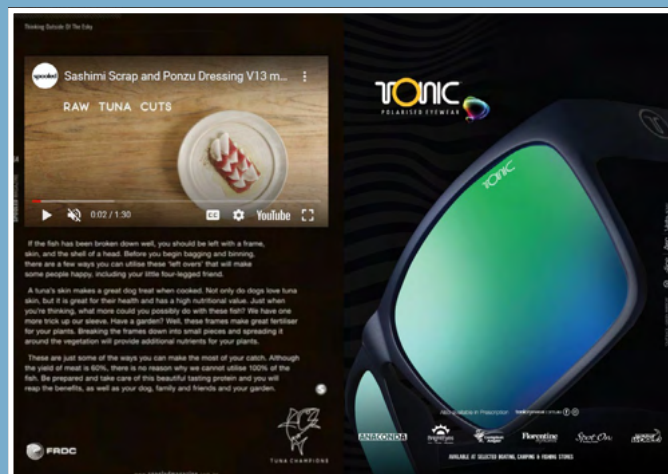
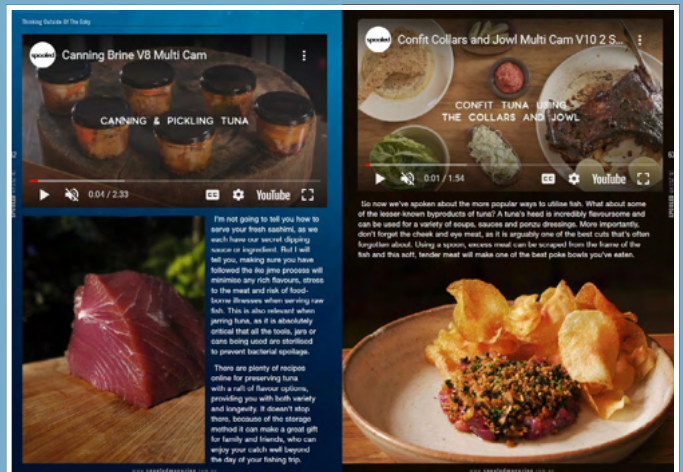
Spoiled Magazine Summer Issue 2023 (14th December, 2023)

This article discusses the importance of chilling fish and the Ike Jime Process.



Spoiled Magazine Autumn Issue 2024 (14th April, 2024)

This issue discusses utilising the entire fish by thinking outside of the box. Minimising wastage and ways to achieve this is the sole focus.



The Captain (Issue #28)

An introductory article explaining the Tuna Champions program, what we do, who we are and some key messaging.



TALKING TUNA

WITH NICK THOMPSON

WHETHER FOR RELEASING OR EATING, INDU RECKONS YOU SHOULD ALWAYS GIVE YOUR CAUGHT TUNA A LITTLE LOVE.

Any time you're in Bluefin, there are two main reasons for the Captain's love affair with the Tuna Champions and it's all about the tuna. Whether you're releasing or eating, giving your caught tuna a little love is always a good idea. We're talking about the love you give your tuna when you catch it, not the love you give it when you eat it. We're talking about the love you give your tuna when you catch it, not the love you give it when you eat it. We're talking about the love you give your tuna when you catch it, not the love you give it when you eat it.

RELEASE THE FISH

If you plan on releasing your fish, and preservation is the key to this, then you need to know the right way to handle your fish. The first rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The second rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The third rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The fourth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The fifth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The sixth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The seventh rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The eighth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The ninth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The tenth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun.

FISH ON THE DECK

When you're on the deck, you need to know the right way to handle your fish. The first rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The second rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The third rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The fourth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The fifth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The sixth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The seventh rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The eighth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The ninth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun. The tenth rule is to keep the fish out of the sun.

"WEAR WET GLOVES OR MAKE SURE YOU HAVE WET HANDS TO AVOID DAMAGING THE SKIN."

LAST MAN STANDING

REFRESHING AUSTRALIAN LAGER

Co-Founded by Australian Olympic legend Steven Bradbury OAM, Last Man Standing has a classic, full flavor that's perfect for any occasion. Perfect for an Aussie summer.

Proudly 100% Australian owned and made, check out our website for your nearest retailer or venue and try our Perfectly Paced Australian Lager for yourself!

AUSTRALIAN OWNED AUSTRALIAN MADE

TALKING TUNA

WITH NICK THOMPSON

INDU'S TOP 10 TIPS FOR TUNA TAMING

1. Keep your fish out of the sun.
2. Keep your fish out of the sun.
3. Keep your fish out of the sun.
4. Keep your fish out of the sun.
5. Keep your fish out of the sun.
6. Keep your fish out of the sun.
7. Keep your fish out of the sun.
8. Keep your fish out of the sun.
9. Keep your fish out of the sun.
10. Keep your fish out of the sun.

THE ALL-NEW STABICRAFT 1850 SUPERCAB

LONGER, WIDER, DRIER.

Every new feature in the All-New 1850 Supercab is reflective of Stabicraft's latest design DNA. Functionality and quality combine, making it larger, wider, better, with the capacity to carry more fuel. The cabin now has a massive interior volume where even the largest of anglers will feel comfortable at the helm.

Check out your large adventure boat at stabicraft.com

The Captain (Issue #29)

This article explains the science behind the educational information we share to recreational fishers. This includes satellite tagging and fish movements and behaviours.



The Captain (Issue #30)

This article discusses the importance of chilling fish and the Ike Jime Process.



Golden Tuna Charter Operator

Charter operators have been a critical focus of the Tuna Champions program since its inception, recognised as key drivers of behavioral change within the fishery. As many anglers experience tuna fishing for the first time through charters, operators shape their clients' habits and attitudes. Additionally, their prolific online presence, often featuring photos of large catches to promote their businesses, positions them as influencers within the recreational fishing community.

However, early observations revealed gaps in catch processing practices that impacted meat quality. While most operators bled their fish, few brain-spiked or gilled and gutted them. Ice, an essential factor for preserving fish quality, was often insufficient due to space constraints on vessels and the added cost. These challenges highlighted areas for improvement while underscoring the importance of working with charter operators to promote responsible fishing practices.

From the outset of Tuna Champions v1.0, it was clear that the program needed to build credibility within the fishery before encouraging charter operators to adopt new behaviors. Unlike recreational fishers, charter operators are economically driven, prioritising profitability and efficiency. Convincing them to adopt practices requiring more time, expense, and effort—such as improved fish processing and increased ice usage—needed to align with their business goals.

Traditionally, charter success has been measured by catch rates or landing trophy fish, with marketing efforts emphasising these achievements. Yet, Tuna Champions identified two key opportunities for behavioral change: emphasising the value of delivering both an exceptional fishing experience and high-quality meat, and promoting the idea that large fish can still be weighed after being properly processed. This dual approach not only improves product quality but also introduces a unique marketing

angle, setting early adopters apart in a competitive industry.

To test this strategy, the program launched the Golden Charter Operator initiative in 2023. This was after establishing significant momentum and gaining recognition within the charter community. A pilot collaboration with Richie Abela of Dreamcatcher II Sportfishing proved the concept. Richie, who previously did not prioritise fish care or releasing catches, embraced the program's principles. He found that adopting responsible fishing practices allowed him to offer clients a superior product they could enjoy long after their trip while contributing but still enjoying a high quality fishing experience.

This shift demonstrates that charter operators can thrive by balancing exceptional service with responsible practices, creating a snowball effect that could redefine standards across the sector. With increasing client demand for holistic fishing experiences, responsible practices may soon become the new industry norm.

"So tuna season is upon us once again, as if it ever finished! If the last 12 months is anything to go by you could literally catch a bluefin in various sizes for in 12 months of the year in Victoria... This post may ruffle a couple of feathers, and maybe that is what is needed! However, it is certainly not what this post is intended for! Let's face it, as charter boat customers or even recreational fishers fishing out of your own boat, the ultimate goal is to catch that target fish, be it a school fish or what we call barrels (a fish over 100kg). Once that fish is caught, then what? I get it, that some people like catching the fish but not eating them and if that's the case then maybe let them go! Not that I'm against anyone taking a fish or two to eat at all as I am a hunter-gatherer like most of you. We

spend so much money on gear, tackle, fuel and accommodation to catch these beautiful fish yet the same level of dedication and respect for the resource is not given once the fish is caught in a lot of cases.

For the client who books a charter boat and often spends thousands doing so, what do you expect from the experience? Is it just the thrill of catching that ultimate fish? Most people would probably say yes but that is most likely because you don't do it enough think beyond that end game which I can't hold against you.

So it's up to us!!

The more experienced captains and crew and not just charter boats, to lead the way. For you the client, what should you expect from your charter boat experience? You should expect a basic level of respect for that animal after death! Bleed well, gutted and the means to chill it and keep it fresh, be it an ice box or chiller bag. A minimum amount of ice onboard is required to maintain a chilled fish all day should catch on early in the day (7 to 10 bags at the very least).

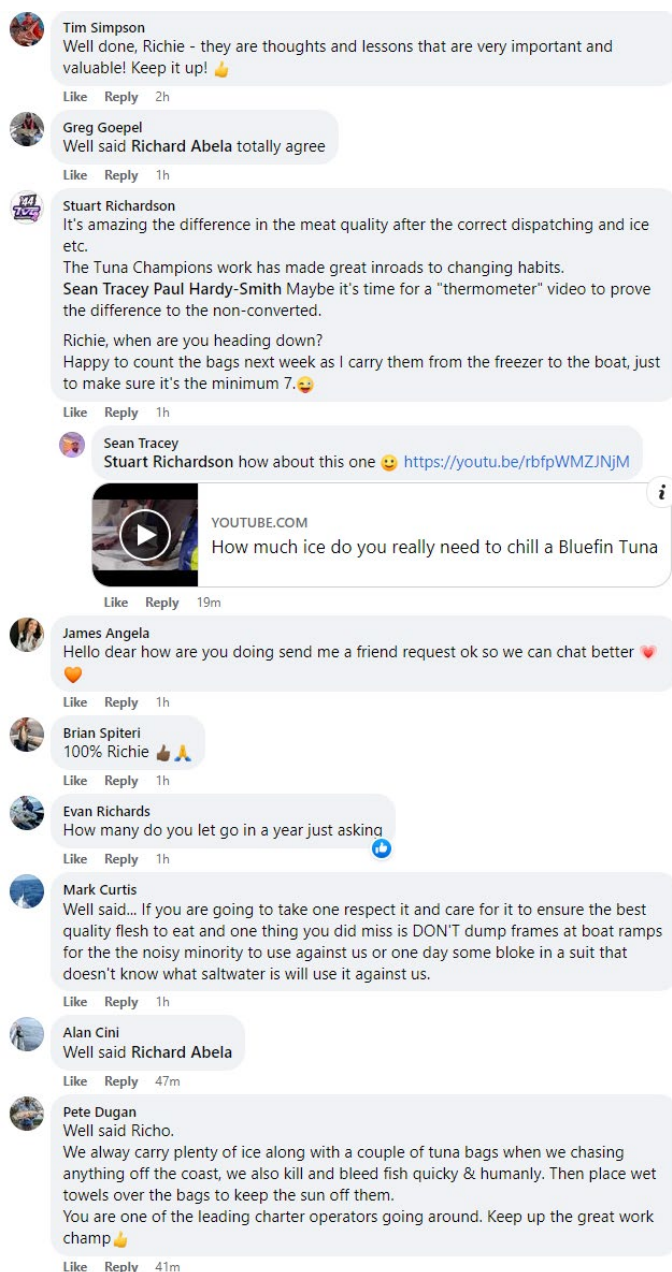
There are so many chiller bags on the market and I for one have several which include the Madfish Gear variety that have served me well so far. It's not even the cost of one quality game rod yet it astounds me that a lot of charter boats and even rec fishermen don't carry them. 10 bags of ice at \$4.50 a bag = \$45. It's not super expensive but I get that it's still money. But it's money well spent especially for you the client who gets to enjoy that day aboard your favourite charter boat way beyond that one off adventure you had.

If this post is making you question yourself and how you do things, then my job is done

here. If it just makes you angry when you read this, then you are probably the problem and in which case I apologise for making you angry. I can assure you it was not my intention but only to educate people who are not yet experienced enough to understand the difference between a well looked after fish and what is required to do so. Tuna Champions page has a lot of great tips for those who are still learning."

– Richie Abela, Charter Captain, Tuna Champions Ambassador and Golden Charter Operator.





By creating a brand around 'Golden Charter Operators' it acted as a form of accreditation that the program and Richie could use to promote his business as an operator of choice for clients looking for a tuna charter. This is promoted across our social media, website and talk nights.

Within days of the concept launch Tuna Champions was approached by various operators with submissions to become a golden operator. As well as this, comments displaying social sanctioning became apparent under the posts launching the Golden Charter Operator program.

In early 2024 Tyson Kain, owner of Want 2 Fish Charters in South Australia applied via the Golden Charter Operator prospectus. Tyson is now leading the way and releasing a large portion of the fish he catches, particularly the big ones and looking after his catch according to the Tuna Champions messaging and both Richie and Tyson have adopted the use of the large Boga grips to manage and release large fish boatside to reduce damaging the fish which might affect survival. Both successfully use the brand to promote their businesses.

The development of a prospectus to outline our expectations for our operators, as well as what services we can provide them. There is a carefully placed clause within this which protects us and the operator by providing us with an opportunity to terminate the relationship if their practices no longer align with our messaging.

The Tuna Champions Golden Charter Operator prospectus document.

GOLDEN TUNA CHARTER OPERATORS

Tuna Champions is a stewardship program encouraging recreational fishers to play a part in improving tuna fisheries by applying best practices for responsible fishing. Better fishing practices minimise the impact on fish stocks, consider the welfare of individual fish and overall, make the recreational fishing sector better stewards of the resource.

"As a charter operator and super keen fisherman, looking after my catch is not only good practice, it's vital in maintaining the eating quality of our tuna for our clients and ourselves. Better quality fish means our clients can enjoy their 'day out' well beyond the day they booked with us."

— Richie Abela, Dream Catcher Sportfishing II



Thorough discussion with potential candidates to aid appropriate selection is critical to not damaging the brand. Their actions need to match their intentions to be part of the program.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

Simply email bluefin@tunachampions.com.au with an Expression of Interest and we will get back to you with your eligibility as a Golden Charter Operator for our program. If accepted, we will send you a Tuna Champions Charter Operator package and complete an onboarding template so we can create a profile for you on our website. In this EOI please detail how you care for your catch, including release techniques, dispatching processes and the finished product that your clients can expect (fillets, regurgitated, steaked).

I DO SOLEMNLY SWEAR TO CATCH, HANDLE, KEEP OR RELEASE TUNA AS SAFELY AND HUMANELY AS POSSIBLE - AND TO PREPARE IT WELL. SO NO FISH IS WASTED.

WE WANT YOU ON THE TEAM

[Learn more](#)



RICHIE A
Melbourne VIC
SIT are tough competitors. I like the challenge of the fight - and the joy of seeing someone catch their first big one.
[Read more](#)



STUART N
Englehawk Neck TAS
SIT have been a big part of my life for years. I still love taking customers out to experience catching this amazing fish.
[Read more](#)

SOCIAL AUDIENCE

Facebook

10K likes

12K followers

90 day reach: 1.54M

Instagram

5.4K followers

90 day reach: 26K

[@tunachampions](#)

[tunachampions](#)

[tuna champions](#)

The Tuna Champions program currently reaches over 11 countries on social media.

Top countries: Australia, United States, New Zealand

GOLDEN TUNA CHARTER OPERATOR PROGRAM

Do you believe you apply best practice when catching tuna on charters and would be a good fit as a Golden Operator for our program?

We are actively looking for people to advocate for our program through applying the best practices, which can be found in our Code of Conduct. This mutually beneficial relationship allows you to share the Tuna Champions ethos which benefits our program, but it also allows our brand to pushfish and share your business and provide you with exposure through our program. Often many clients who fish you will be new to Game Fishing, which is why it is so important that as operators you can provide them with the education they need to apply best practices when catching tuna.

[Read more](#)

WHAT'S INVOLVED?

The Golden Tuna Charter Operator Status may be something that clients will be looking for when choosing which boat they would like to charter. Meaning, this accreditation may not only improve business, but leave clients with the highest quality experience onboard your vessel and the best product on their plate.

Being a Tuna Champion means caring for your catch whether you're retaining or releasing fish. This involves handling your catch with care by using single hooks, knuckle nets and the 2-mo process for dispatching to name a few. Not only does this result in giving the fish a better chance of survival, but it would mean, a better meal on your plate for your clients if you chose to keep one for a food.

[Read more](#)

WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR US?

There is no requirement as to the quantity of content delivered, as we understand that fish aren't always on the clock.

You must live and breathe the Tuna Champions Ethos and want to educate others such as your clients to also use best practice.

Sharing images of your catch both on the water and in the kitchen is also a great way to promote your charter and our message, so tag us and we can feature this with our audience.



There is however an expectation of quality as outlined:

Catch

- Using single hooks when releasing tuna
- Heavy gear (line, leader, rods and reels)

Handle

- Wet hands
- Knuckle landing nets
- Proven scale for handling fish onboard
- Efficiency whether dispatching or releasing

Release

- Using lip grips to control larger fish onboard
- Gently placing fish in the water
- Tagging (if applicable) in the correct location

Keep

- Dispatching fish using the 2-mo process (brain spike, bleed, gills, gut and gills)
- Using fish in a subzero ice slurry

Prepare

- Keeping fish chilling until the core temperature reaches 0°C
- Utilising the fish to maximise yield and minimise wastage

Continue spreading the message through conversations with your clients about the history of tuna fisheries and the importance of caring for the catch, maybe even releasing a fish for someone else to catch in the future.

IMAGERY GUIDELINES



Use single hooks instead of treble hooks.



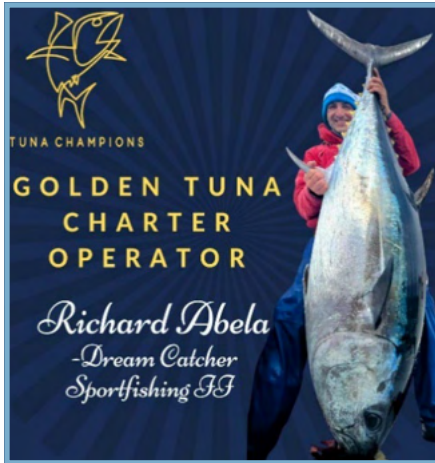
Fish predominantly cleaned of blood, and hands are not placed in the gills of fish.



Instead of fish lying on the deck, fish are in an ice slurry fully submerged, gassed and gilled, blood, brain spined and jotted.



Fish are cradled to support their entire bodyweight.



Golden Tuna Charter Operator Richie Abela from Dream Catcher Sportfishing II. This is an example of the promotional material utilised for social media, flyers and our website.



Our latest Tuna Champions Golden Charter operator Tyson Kain from South Australia.



Tuna Champion of the year 2023/2024

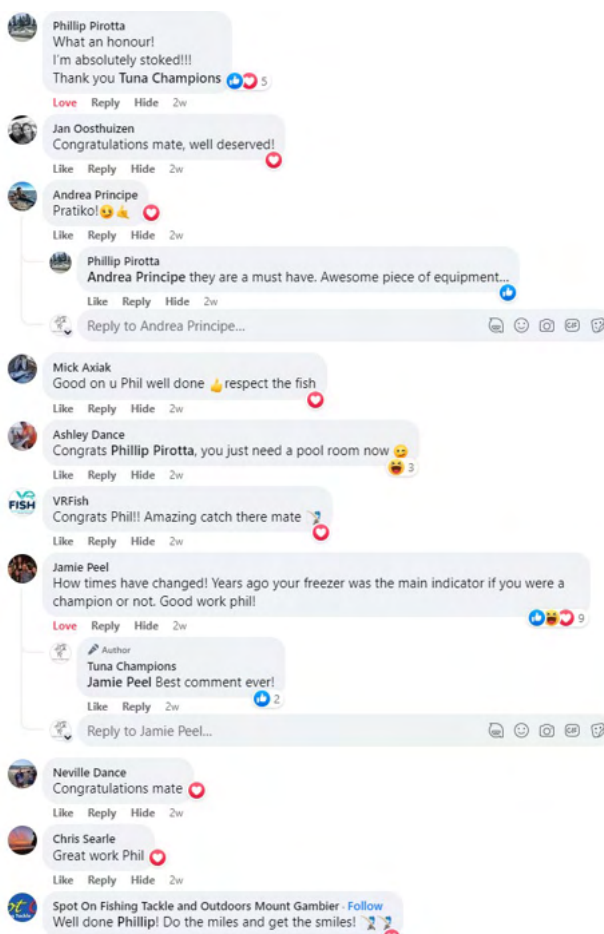
The natural progression of the program leads to acknowledging the efforts from individuals within the sector. This assists by creating a sense of belonging, a challenge and reward for adopting the Tuna Champions ethos. This was achieved through the creation of the 'Tuna Champion of the Year' award. The award is considered by application either in person or nomination. The winner each year is the entrant who most aligns their fishing practices with the programs ethos and presents this publicly through any form of communication medium.

The inaugural recipient of the award was Phillip Pirotta from Victoria. The application clearly demonstrated how he cares for his tuna, big or small, release or dispatch his exemplary efforts made him a clearly deserving winner of the award.

As the inaugural recipient, a Tuna Champions trophy was hand crafted by Matt Durell from Skeletal Designs. The award also came with a package of Tuna Champions apparel.

The inaugural Tuna Champions of the Year Award recipient, Phil Pirotta releasing a large Southern Bluefin Tuna boatside using Boga lip grips.

Below: The advertisement utilised on social media encouraging fishers to nominate themselves or others for the award and the trophy had crafted by Matt Durell from Skeletal Designs.



Tuna Champion of the year 2024/2025

In 2024 the award went to 10-year-old Charlie Hodgens from Port Lincoln. Charlie is an avid fisher who predominately tags and releases Tuna. As you can see from the imagery, he takes pride in caring for his catch and is a role model for other youths in the sector.



2024 Tuna Champions of the Year Award recipient, Charlie Hodgens about to release some Southern Bluefin Tuna after correctly placing the tags high up under the second dorsal fin.

TUNA CHAMPIONS

Take the TC Quiz

The TC quiz is designed to test the uptake of knowledge from our website and provide participants with a certificate of completion (**Figure 2**). This has been rolled out for generic public use and as a tool for game fishing clubs and tournaments to encourage anglers to skill up prior to fishing.

The questions range from hook types, through to Ike Jime processes and to achieve a pass, all questions must be answered correctly.

Figure 2. The 'TC Quiz' designed for fishers to test their knowledge or be utilised for tournaments to ensure participants have had adequate training prior to fishing.



1. What hook types improves the survivorship of fish (more than 1 answer could be correct)?

- ☐ A) Barbless hooks
- ☐ B) Single hooks
- ☐ C) Treble hooks
- ☐ D) Barbed hooks

2. When tagging, the tag should be inserted?

- ☐ A) Next to the first dorsal fin
- ☐ B) In the muscle near the second dorsal fin
- ☐ C) High on the shoulder near the second dorsal fin into the spines

3. Steps to process a tuna go in what order?

- ☐ A) Gill & gut, bleed, chill, brain spike and pith
- ☐ B) Chill, pith, gill & gut, bleed and brain spike
- ☐ C) Brain spike, bleed, pith, gill & gutted and chill

4. What method is more effective to chill tuna?

- ☐ A) Filling the gut cavity with ice consistently
- ☐ B) Placing the fish in a seawater and ice slurry
- ☐ C) A wet towel soaked in salt water

5. How long should you chill your tuna for before beginning the breakdown and processing?

- ☐ A) 48 hours
- ☐ B) 6 hours
- ☐ C) Just after the fish has been landed

Collaborators

Spotters X Tuna Champions

“See the Change”

Spotters are an Australian made and owned brand producing high quality fishing glassware for those spending time on the water. Their market has traditionally been fishing orientated and with their glasses being worn by leaders in the industry such as Paul Worsteling and Peak Sportfishing.



Born from a conversation at the Australian Fishing Tackle and Trade show on the Gold Coast the idea of collaboration was presented to Spotters to produce a limited-edition glass. The glass signifies the bond between industry and our stewardship program to promote change within the sector.

“We’re an Australian made and owned company, we’ve been around for 25 years and make fishing sunglasses. We love supporting companies like Tuna Champions.”

– Steph Pugh (Director, Spotters Sunglasses)



Iki Pik X Tuna Champions

Iki Pik are an Australian brand responsible for the creation of a recognisable tool used to brain spike various fish species. The yellow handled tool is in most tackle stores across Australia.

The Tuna Champions Project Manager, India Thompson had frequent discussions with fishers at talk nights about the availability and cost of Ike Jime kits. Tuna Champions had reached a point where it could provide educational tools to fishers but also the practical tools that will allow them to care for their catch.

From this a collaboration with Iki Pik, a kit was formed. The Iki kit includes a blood knife, pithing wire and brain spike at an affordable price of \$70. 100 kits were ordered and will be sole across the website and if successful, in stores.



Figure 3. One component of the Iki-Kit in use for a small Yellowfin Tuna.



Preserve your tuna

Little Tuna are a boutique Australian company that produce commercially preserved rod and line caught tuna. Little Tuna approached TC to gauge interest on a collaboration that produces labelled jars designed to give fishers the tools to preserve their own catch. They include the recipes, pre-made labels and the jars themselves. This concept encourages recreational fishers to minimise wastage and allows them to enjoy their catch well beyond the day of harvest,

The jars will be available to purchase on our website or instore.



Undertow x Reel Brand x Tuna Champions collab

We have developed and collaborated on branded merchandise and have created a range of products to promote the Tuna Champions program.

Promotional items include stickers for cars and boats, information booklets and waterproof cards for boats, flyers and a re-vamp of the SBT Code of Practice for recreational fishers.

As well as our t-shirts, hoodies and caps, we collaborated with high profile fishing organisations to develop quality co-branded products, as follows:

- **Fishing apparel company, Reel Brand and Undertow Saltwater Apparel** – a limited run of Reel Tuna Champions fishing shirts paying homage to our expansion to include yellowfin. These were available for sale at a range of tackle stores throughout Australia, and some from our Tuna Champions shop

“We have been acutely aware of a need to contribute to a conservational movement but really wanted to make sure we commit our time, money and resources to something genuine, and well executed, as opposed to just some marketing fluff, and we really feel you guys fall into the right category.”

– Curtis Waterman, Halco Tackle



Science Tools

A focus of the Tuna Champions program is bringing science-based information to the recreational fishing community using simple and relatable mediums.

Weight Calculator

Due to the abundance of research conducted on SBT, Tuna Champions has provided a weight calculator¹ allowing fishers to estimate the weight of their catch using length measurements, area and the time of year caught. This tool helps to promote recreational fisher to release their catch.

Figure 4. The weight calculator is an interactive tool on the website allowing fishers to get an accurate depiction as to the approximate weight of their fish based on measurements, location of capture and the time of year.

1 (<https://tunachampions.com.au/about-tuna/bluefin#caring-for-your-catch>. Accessed 22 September 2024)

Weight Calculator

Calculate your tuna's weight from it's length

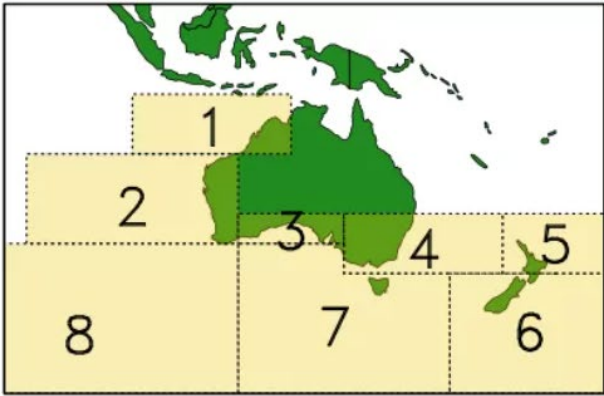
Region (see map) 1

Quarter ☒ 1 (Jan-Mar) ☐ 2 (Apr-Jun) ☐ 3 (Jul-Sep) ☐ 4 (Oct-Dec)

Length (cm) 130

Processed Weight (kg) 34.7

Whole Weight (kg) 39.9





SBT Chilling Time Calculator

An important message the program aims to address is the amount of ice required and the time it takes to chill down endothermic tuna after they have been dispatched. Davey (2015) provided a methodology to simulate the cooling of fish in an ice slurry, based on the transient cooling equation and practical simplifying assumptions, is convenient because it primarily requires the fish's weight, or the weight from length tool can be used to convert length which is easy to measure at sea. The app is intended to be calibrated for specific fisheries, but was parameterised using an Southern Bluefin Tuna (SBT).

Illustrative simulations for SBT show that a 35 kg fish, harvested at 28°C, will cool to 5°C at its thermal centre in 10.23 hours when placed in slurry maintained at 0°C.

The predictions align well with published Heisler charts, indicating the simulation is free from programming and computational errors. Notably, the simulations reveal that even a slight increase in slurry temperature significantly affects cooling time. For instance, if the slurry temperature rises to 2°C due to insufficient ice, the time to cool the tuna to 5°C extends to 12.27 hours (Davey, 2015). This highlights how important it is to take sufficient ice to keep the slurry cold to ensure the quality of the meat is preserved. We have taken the methodology and coded in the programming language R and created a shiny app that can be easily used by recreational fishers.

Figure 5. This calculator enables fishers to estimate how much ice they will need to cool their Tuna over a period of time.

SBT CHILLING TIME CALCULATOR

View in landscape mode on mobile

°C. ICE SLURRY BULK TEMPERATURE

0

°C. INITIAL TEMPERATURE OF FISH

28

°C. TARGET FISH CORE TEMPERATURE

5

KG. MASS OF FISH

5,15,25,35

Separate multiple fish mass values with a comma

TRY COMPARING CHILLING TIMES BETWEEN A PROPER SEAWATER ICE SLURRY (~ -2°C) TO ONE WITHOUT ENOUGH ICE THAT GETS JUST A BIT ABOVE FREEZING (2°C)

Reference: Davey 2015 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lwt.2014.08.022>

MASS	CHILL.TIME
5 KG	1.46 HOURS
15 KG	4.38 HOURS
25 KG	7.3 HOURS
35 KG	10.22 HOURS

Competitions and giveaways

We have developed a range of giveaways to promote the Tuna Champions program. These include stickers in various sizes and colours for boats, cars, and even laptops and schoolbooks, as well as waterproof information cards for use on boats, and more. These have been given out at various events and fishing gear outlets, in mail outs, with all purchases of merchandise, and at meetings and conferences.

The aim of creating a range of Tuna Champion merchandise was to get 'brands on backs', so we often run promotions to nudge people to buy our attractive gear – while also encouraging them to be Tuna Champions in their actions. We have held many competitions over the life of the project.

Tuna Champions 10k Giveaway

To celebrate Tuna Champions reaching 10,000 likes on Facebook a giveaway was held to gift a chill bag and apparel package to a random winner (Figure 6). To enter, participants have to like, share and comment on the post. This provides Tuna Champions with additional exposure across all social media platforms.



Figure 6. The Flyer used for promotional material across social media to celebrate Tuna Champions reaching a milestone of 10,000 followers on Facebook.

Tuna Champion Patrick Dangerfield Signed Shirt competition 2023 – Exposure

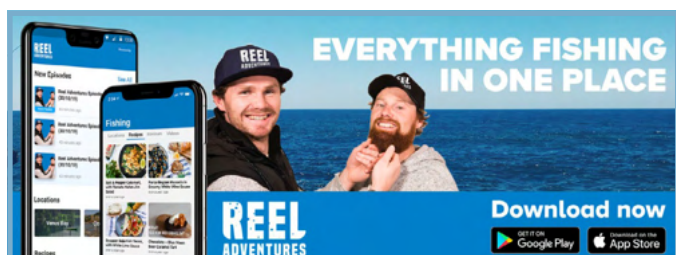
Patrick Dangerfield has been a key supporter of the program and provided us an audience beyond the fishing community. This has positive benefits for the outlook of the broader community upon recreational fishers, showing fishers are taking steps to care for their catch. Giveaways and social media promotion has been a great aid to enhancing our exposure.



Reel Adventures

Episode 273: A great weekend at the Ultimate Fishing Expo

In this episode, Indy discussed the program, what we aim to achieve and the change in recreational fishers caring for their catch.



FIVEAA Radio

Indy Thompson – 27 June 2023 · In 1 playlist(s) · The FIVEAA Fishing Show with Ned McHenry



In this episode Indy discussed the importance of caring for your catch and why Tuna are so physiologically Tuna are so unique.

Australian Lure Podcast

Episode 608: Southern Bluefin Tuna With Indy Thompson



In this episode Indy discussed the significance of caring for tuna and the best ways to do this. Also how preparation can improve the survivorship of tuna and quality of the fish you decide to dispatch.

Undertow May-dens of the Sea

Episode 2: May-Dens of the Sea

In this episode, Indy Thompson talks about all things fishing, including the significance of caring for your catch to attain top-quality meat.



All the Gear and No Idea

Episode 79: Indy Thompson, Tuna Champions



This episode Indy spoke about the great work that the Tuna Champions is doing to promote best practices to catch Tuna and then either respect the catch and make the most of the flesh, or alternatively return the tuna with the best chance of survival.

Objective 2 / Develop a research hub to facilitate ongoing recreational fisher engagement in studies pertaining to key tuna species in Australia.

Performance Indicators achieved:

- **A willingness of grass roots fishers to participate in ongoing research initiatives relating to key tuna species.**

We now have an opportunity to leverage the power of our growing social media community of recreational tuna fishers! By creating a dynamic Research Engagement Hub, we aim to introduce a “Research Angler” component to our program.

This initiative will be guided by the expertise of our project’s research team and will focus on identifying research programs across Australia—and beyond—that can benefit from valuable data contributed by the recreational fishing community. Together, we can bridge the gap between recreational fishing and impactful scientific research!

This new initiative offers a unique opportunity to create a network of specially trained anglers who will collect valuable biological data and samples, such as otoliths and tissue, for key species. Additionally, select anglers can collaborate with researchers on advanced tagging programs, going beyond traditional efforts like the New South Wales Game Fish Tagging Program to include satellite tagging. These programs will provide insights into fish movement, behavior, post-release survival, and the impact of handling practices.

Not only will this collaboration benefit the research community and enhance species management, but it will also feed science-backed insights into educational programs—such as improving post-release survival and handling techniques. Plus, it will generate outstanding content for the project’s communication and engagement initiatives, bringing the science closer to the fishing community.



SELECTION AND TRAINING OF RESEARCH ANGLERS

To maximise data quality, it is best practice to screen potential participants and appropriately train those selected to participate in the correct procedure required to sample biological data from their catch. This would include measuring the fish, removing and storing otoliths, sexing and staging fish, clean sampling of tissue samples, good record keeping techniques and producing a high-quality photographic process to validate data collected.

To screen potential participants, we have developed a prospectus for people to register their interest. For program management purposes and to maximise data and sample quality, it would be most beneficial to grow a limited number of participants that span the geographic range of Australia. This will allow for sample collection from all areas that key species may be caught.



SCIENCE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

Are you a person that believes in the importance of marine science and would like to contribute in some way?

We are actively looking to skill up people as volunteer scientist to assist with sample collection. We will provide you the training and tools to collect fish otoliths (used to age the fish), take standard biological measurements from the fish and also sample and preserve both gonads to assess reproduction and muscle tissue samples for genetic analysis.



WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

- Training will be provided on the expectations of specimen sampling and should there be any questions the Tuna Champions team are more than happy to assist.
- Equipment to complete the processing.
- Joining a limited network/community of volunteer scientists from around Australia.
- A Tuna Champions apparel package.
- Training will be provided on the expectations of specimen sampling and should there be any questions the Tuna Champions team are more than happy to assist.



WHAT CAN YOU DO FOR US?

- A commitment to volunteer a certain amount of time to collect samples.
- Following the protocols you are taught to ensure the samples are of the best quality, etc.
- If we have events in your region your presence and attendance at our booths or shows is invaluable to help spread the message.

HOW DO I GET INVOLVED?

Simply email bluefin@tunachampions.com.au with an Expression of Interest. In your EOI please outline your previous experience in marine science, or your inspiration to be involved in improving the current knowledge and understanding surrounding tuna. As well as this, please include your proximity to the ocean to ensure you are able to attend boat ramps or your availability to be able to travel and collect samples. and we will get back to you with your eligibility to be an ambassador for our program. If accepted, we will send you a Tuna Champions Ambassador package and complete an onboarding template so we can create a profile for you on our website.



Fish tagging is synonymous with game fishing for large pelagics and sports fish. Some of the longest running citizen science initiatives in Australia relate to the application of conventional external tags on recreationally caught fish, including the Suntag Program², SAFTAG³ and the New South Wales Gamefishing Tagging Program (Goddard et al., 2024; Lowry and Murphy, 2003), which was founded in 1973 with over half-a-million gamefish tagged. While the program originally had a strong focus on tagging marlin, in more recent years tuna are starting to dominate the number of fish tagged.

Any collection of information for scientific purposes requires a high degree of rigour to ensure its validity and representation of the data relative to the questions being addressed. Some of the most critical components of a tagging study is that the data from the tagging event is accurate and complete. The NSW gamefish tagging program provides cards which anglers fill in the details of their tagging event. Noting an accurate location and fish length are critical to ensure if the fish are recaptured the data from the recapture can be compared with that from tagging to determine the fish's movements and also the increase in length over the time that animal was at liberty. Most important, is that the tagging cards are returned in a timely manner.

Simplifying this process by migrating the manual card system to an app-based data recording system has great potential to minimise the burden of collating and posting physical cards.

Another critical component is proper tag placement, and this requires care and training. From a research perspective, if tags are not applied properly, it can increase tag loss. If the data is then used for tag-recapture estimates of abundance, the results can be significantly biased. It is also important from an animal welfare perspective, as poor tag placement can injure a fish and, in some cases, may lead to mortality. Some states have legislation stating that fish cannot be damaged before being released, this can limit the legality of tagging fish, as inserting a tag could be considered a form of injuring the fish. The NSW tagging program and others address through primarily distributing tags through gamefishing clubs who then have the onus of ensuring that fishers that are provided tags are trained in their use. Anecdotally, there is room for improvement in training for tagging.



² <https://suntag.org.au/>. Accessed: 22 September 2024.

³ <https://ansa-sa.org/SAFTAG.php>. Accessed: 22 September 2024.

Providing information and educational videos of correct tagging procedures and placement has been feature of the Tuna Champions program and we recommend that gamefishing clubs use these resources to increase the knowledge of tagging methods and reduce the implications of poor tagging techniques. An example relevant to tuna is that the tag type used relies on anchoring the attachment end of the tag between the pterygiophores (fin rays) under the second dorsal fin. For marlin and sharks, a different attachment anchor is used which is designed to be inserted into the dorsal muscle of the fish. This subtle difference is important but potentially lost in the communication of appropriate tagging methods between species and tag types.



The Tuna Champions program will continue to promote the best tagging practices for Tuna and encourage others to share this information to minimise detrimental impacts to fish and maximise the benefit of the engagement of the recreational fishing community in collecting important information for research.

Satellite tagging

The use of pop-up satellite tags (PSATs) provide detailed information on the movement and behaviour of fish. They have been used extensively for several decades greatly improving understanding habitat utilisation of many species including large pelagics (Block et al., 2011, Paterson et al., 2018; Tracey et al., 2023). They have also been used extensively to assess post-release survival of a range of species, both from commercial fisheries but also recreational fisheries (Musyl et al., 2015; Tracey et al., 2016; Tracey et al., 2023). The application of satellite tags is primarily conducted by research scientists. The cost of the tags is high and proper application techniques and fish handling practices are critical to maximise the potential for tag retention and minimising impact to the fish and any altered behaviour of the fish after release. Most contemporary research on animals also require appropriate ethics committee approval and in some cases the application of tags is seen as a veterinary procedure that requires training and certification to perform. There are however, some successful satellite tagging programs where recreational fishers are working with researchers in a collaborative way.

The International Game Fishing Association (IGFA) Great Marlin Race (GMR)⁴ is an example of a very successful satellite tagging program. The GMR is a research collaboration between the IGFA and Stanford University with several corporate sponsors and philanthropic donations funding this large scale tagging program. In this program fishers are trained to deploy satellite tags by highly trained researchers. The program has tagged over 550 fish since its inception and contributed to over ten internationally peer-reviewed papers.

⁴ <https://igfa.org/the-great-marlin-race/>. Accessed: 22 September 2024.

Recreational fishers have also assisted in satellite tagging programs by offering their services and vessels to take researchers to sea to facilitate tagging (Tracey et al., 2018; Tracey et al., 2023). Game fishers are often highly skilled anglers that have excellent local knowledge on how best to target and maximise catch rates of large pelagics in their region. This is of great value to the research community in terms of cost of deploying tags, engagement with fishers and at times, tagging in areas that commercial fisheries don't frequently operate in. A recent example was the tagging of Swordfish off the southeast coast of Australia (Tracey et al., 2023). A previous study had worked with the commercial fishery to satellite tags in the Coral Sea, the area most targeted by the commercial fishery on the east coast of Australia, they very rarely fish for or catch Swordfish in the higher latitudes adjacent to Bass Strait or Tasmania. The tags deployed with the recreational fishing community in combination with the commercial tagging program revealed a great amount of information on the movement and behaviour of the species that would not have been revealed without the assistance of the recreational fishing community.

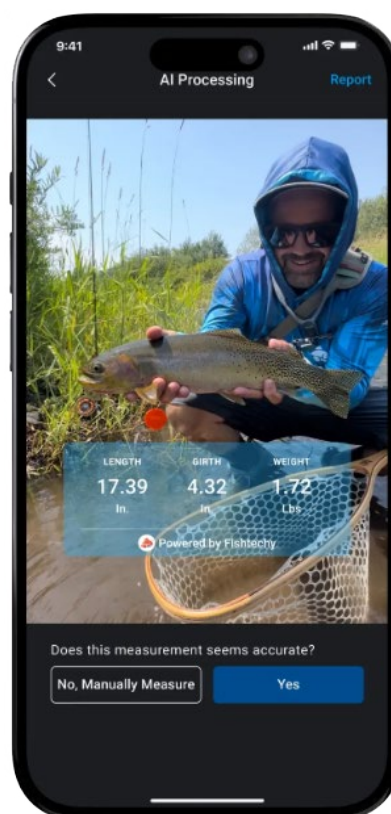
The Tuna Champions program is currently conducting a satellite tagging program on Yellowfin Tuna to determine movement, behaviour and post-release survival. To date, the tag deployments have all occurred with the assistance of the recreational fishery on the east coast of Australia, including the charter sector.

Fishtechy offers advanced fish measurement features utilising Proof Ball technology. With the Proof Ball, you can accurately measure the length, girth, and weight of fish in seconds. Fishtechy ensures accurate measurements with minimal fish handling, prioritising the well-being of the fish.

Biological sample collection

The participation by community in the collection of data for research is now well established (Cohn, 2008; Shirk et al., 2012, Silvertown, 2009). There are many effective examples of biological sampling programs involving recreational fishers. Key parameters for fisheries assessment include, length, weight, sex, gonad staging to assess reproductive status and age determined by otoliths.

The large number of recreational fishers provide an excellent resource to collect this information to either replace or complement existing fishery-independent sampling programs, which are often expensive to run at scale (Fairclough et al., 2014). Length information can be collected non-lethally and is often done so and reported through angler diary programs (Ingram et al., 2022; Tracey et al., 2011) or App-based reporting through a range of commercial or Government designed and maintained applications, including the use of artificial intelligence and machine learning to measure fish (www.fishtechy.com – accessed: 22 September 2024; Tonachella et al., 2022).



Determining the sex, maturity or aged based information however, requires lethal sampling. To minimise unnecessary mortality of fish, collecting this information from fishers who have caught fish for consumption is an excellent opportunity to maximise the utility of each harvested animal and minimise the impact on stocks through targeted destructive sampling. One of the most effective program designs developed to realise this involves frame collection (Fairclough et al., 2014). That is, the fishers provide the frames of their harvested fish by carefully filleting with the aim of minimising damage to the internal organs, bag the fish with a waterproof note stating the metadata of the capture event and then drop them at a collection point. The sample bags are then collected by fisheries staff and processed.

A critical component of any data collection is having a high standard of data quality assurance and control (Smith, 2011). This involves adequate training and monitoring of fishers that engage in the program to ensure the data is of a standard that can be used by the science community. Collecting more data can enhance the statistical accuracy and power of analyses. However, it may also introduce sampling effects that could impact data quality and necessitate further investigation, such as the species identification skills of volunteers and uneven sampling efforts. For instance, when recreational fishers collect fish length or age data, they often keep larger “trophy” fish. This practice can lead to a sample that doesn’t accurately represent the entire population, potentially skewing population parameters and necessitating further evaluation. Although this doesn’t preclude the use of such data, the lack of control over sample selection by scientists may have hindered the widespread adoption of large-scale citizen science initiatives for recreational fishers to voluntarily provide biological samples. Furthermore, most recreational fisheries rely on minimum legal-size limits as a regulatory tool. This means that sampling of undersize fish, other than recording length, is limited with a frame collection program. All these biases can

be overcome, however, with careful training and vetting of those contributing to the program. The Tuna Champions Science Ambassador program provides a mechanism to facilitate this.

Given that tuna are much larger than most commonly caught recreational species, a frame collection is unlikely to succeed due to the need for transporting and storing large fish frames. An alternative is to develop the skills of the Science Ambassadors to process the fish for the full suite of biological information sought, including the extraction and storage of otoliths. The ambassadors could process their own catch but also those of other fishers if they were inclined to do so. This point is critical for the success of any citizen science program, recruiting and maintaining long-term engagement (Marques et al., 2024).



A draft outline to achieve this would include:

- Development of a Standard Operating Procedure for sampling.
- An announcement through recreational fishing peak bodies and across social media to identify potential science ambassadors (see prospectus in early section).
- Careful vetting of ambassadors to ensure they have the capacity and willingness to participate effectively, with a focus on QA/QC of both sampling and data collection and repositing.
- Development of training videos on how to take samples from the fish and upload the data to an established database.

- Development of sampling kits containing a measuring board, hacksaw, dissection kit, vials to store otoliths, postage bags, instructions, QR code to video instructions.
- Development of a database with appropriate architecture to allow for data upload from users and automated QA/QC checks.
- Development of a simple ‘app’ to act as the user interface for the positing of data in a timely and efficient manner.
- Each Science Ambassador will have their own unique login identifier.
- When the metadata is uploaded to the database, it will automatically provide shipping barcodes, similar to clothes return process.
- The Science Ambassador will print the postage barcode, or take it to local Australia Post Office, allowing them to post otolith samples free of charge.
- The samples will be received at a biorepository hub where they will be archived.

A biobank of tissue samples for molecular and isotopic research

The term “biobank” first appeared in scientific literature in 1996 (Loft and Poulson, 1996), a universally accepted definition has yet to emerge. Over time, the term has been broadly used to refer to collections of biospecimens or human genetic data intended for research purposes. One of the earliest definitions, provided by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), described a biobank as “a collection of biological material and associated data and information stored in an organised system, representing a population or a large subset of a population” (OECD, 2006).

The International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (ISBER)⁵, founded in 1999, aims to promote networking, education, and advancements in biobanking while standardising biobanking practices. One of its primary goals is to develop guidelines that ensure the availability of high-quality specimens for future research. The “ISBER Best Practices: Recommendations for Repositories” outlines the most effective procedures for managing samples, offering both evidence-based and consensus-based practices for the collection, long-term storage, retrieval, and distribution of specimens.

The European Commission emphasizes that biobanks specifically collect biological samples and associated data for medical research and diagnostic purposes, organising them systematically (European Commission, 2012). Biorepositories (ISBER) and biological resource centres (BRCs) (OECD, 2006) may include human and animal tissues, cell and bacterial cultures, and environmental samples, biobanks primarily handle human biospecimens and related donor information, such as demographics, lifestyle, medical history, treatments, and clinical outcomes. What sets biobanks apart from other research collections is their established governance frameworks, which facilitate systematic access to resources by external users (European Commission, 2012). However, we propose these considerations should be fundamental for any biological sample collection whether human or animal.

Information technology (IT), data systems, and record management are crucial components of biobanks. Ensuring the efficiency and security of these elements is essential (Harati et al., 2019). To achieve optimal biobank operations, a robust system for sample traceability is necessary.

⁵ ISBER – International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories. <https://www.isber.org/>. Accessed 22 September 2024.

This can be achieved through the use of barcoding and an IT platform integrated with all institutional systems, allowing for automatic data integration and minimising errors from manual entry.

Biobanks need funding for development, staff management and long-term maintenance (Harati et al., 2019). Financial sustainability can only be attained through a cost recovery policy that incorporates user fees reflecting the actual costs incurred by the biobanks (Clément et al., 2014). An effective economic model should address market needs and the key processes involved in biobanking, including case collection, tissue processing, storage management, sample distribution, infrastructure, and administration costs. Models like the total life cycle cost of ownership (TLCO) enable a clearer understanding of both variable and fixed costs, which are essential for implementing cost recovery programs (Vaught et al., 2011).

While there is currently no widely accepted method for achieving financial sustainability, blending traditional approaches with innovative strategies tailored to the unique needs of biobanks may be crucial. Enhancing societal value and public benefit, while also addressing the interests of funders, researchers and improving stakeholders' perceptions of a biobank is likely the key to achieving economic sustainability.

Collecting large numbers of fish biological tissue from a broad geographic area is expensive, often relying on chartering vessels, or working at sea for extended period of time, generating significant labour costs. But the use of such samples are critical in deepening our understanding of fish species, particularly as molecular techniques continue to advance.

Having a temporal repository of samples is becoming increasingly recognised as critical for many of these modern techniques to determine genotypic change over time related to anthropogenic factors such as climate change and fishing. Further, modern techniques to estimate abundance of fish require large, long-term sets of genotype information. For example, Bravington et al., (2016), used 14,000 tissue samples of juvenile and adult Southern Bluefin Tuna using close-kin mark-recapture. This technique estimated a key parameter for sustainable fisheries management – absolute abundance of adults – avoiding the costs and uncertainty associated with traditional methods.

Recreational fishers constitute a large group of people that access fish on most accessible coastal regions. With appropriate training, equipment and support utilising this group could be of great benefit to collecting many tissue and other biological samples for the use of the scientific community. By harnessing this capacity through the Tuna Champions Science Ambassador program, the recreational fishing community could significantly contribute to the developing the knowledge base of tuna species both in Australia and abroad.

Sample and data quality are paramount for any scientific collection. Careful selection of participants and training would be essential to generate the standards required for scientific purposes which would be linked to the funding potential as the utility of the samples would need to be unquestionable. There are many protocols designed for this in the medical disciplines as outlined previously and they can be lent from, but careful planning and implementation would be required.

An emerging project hosted by the Ocean Health Foundation (OHF)⁶, has delivered a series of -80°C freezers to house a collection of tissue samples harvested by researchers and recreational

⁶ <https://www.oceanhealth.org.au/>. Accessed: 22 September 2024

fishers from marlin (Williams et al., 2015). Tuna Champions are now working with OHF to potentially extend this program to incorporate tuna.

A preliminary protocol for development would require consideration of the following steps.

Prior to Launch:

- Development of a Standard Operating Procedure for sampling.
- An announcement through recreational fishing peak bodies and across social media to identify potential science ambassadors (see prospectus in early section).
- Careful vetting of ambassadors to ensure they have the capacity and willingness to participate effectively, with a focus on QA/QC of both sampling and data collection and repositing.
- Development of training videos on how to take samples from the fish and upload the metadata to the established database.
- Development of sampling kits containing a AllFlex Tissue Sampling Unit (TSU) system, tubes for the sampling system, small bags for repeat samples, postage bags, instructions, QR code to video instructions.
- Development of a database with appropriate architecture to allow for data upload from users and automated QA/QC checks.
- Development of a simple 'app' to act as the user interface for the repositing of data in a timely and efficient manner.
- Each Science Ambassador will have their own unique login identifier.

During:

While ambassadors are fishing they are encouraged to:

- Collect samples using AllFlex TSU.
- Take 2-3 samples per fish.
- Photo of sampled fish to be taken (instructions on how to take clear voucher photo).
- The 2-3 samples are stored in numbered bag.
- Metadata and photo added to app as soon as possible after the capture event.

Finalising:

- When the metadata is uploaded to the database, it will automatically provide shipping barcodes, similar to clothes return process.
- The Science Ambassador will print the postage barcode, or take it to local Australia Post Office, allowing them to post samples free of charge.
- The samples will be received at a biorepository hub where they will be archived into a -80°C freezer.



OHF Biobank for Species Research

Research and biobank library for species management, research and more.



Objective 3 / Develop a self-funding model to ensure the long-term sustainability of Tuna Champions independent of Commonwealth government funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this objective is to identify paths for a self-sustaining funding model for Tuna Champions beyond the life of the current Commonwealth government funding. The Government funding has allowed for the design, development of educational content and roll out of a communication and extension program to develop momentum for the recognition and acknowledgment of the program among the target recreational fishing audience. We believe that Tuna Champions has now matured to a point where a critical mass of recreational tuna fishers in Australia are aware of the program and that the maintenance of core components of the program such as the Ambassador Program, the Golden Charter Operator Program and the Research Fisher Program are now the focus of maintaining the success of the program moving forward to ensure that the behavioural change momentum that the program has achieved to date becomes fully embedded in the ethos of tuna fishing in Australia. Managing these key components and the communication tools that extend the educational content such as the Social Media platforms and Website will see the program well placed to continue to contribute effectively for improved stewardship in recreational tuna fisheries.

Moving to a self-sustaining model does not exclude the program seeking Government funding in the future, particularly if seeking to develop a new initiative or leverage of other funding sources for a realised benefit to improved stewardship through behavioural change or seed the development of further self-sustaining funding opportunities.

There are many recognised self-sustaining recreational fishing associated programs within Australia and overseas. However, many of these are established as lobby groups and supported through a range of funding methods but those that are most successful are often supported by membership fees where the members join to support a 'cause' that tends to focus more in influencing Government Policy. An example in Australia is OzFish, and Trout Unlimited in the United States is a very large program. There are fewer self-sustaining recreational fishing associated programs that are apolitical where rather than having the objective of influencing policy, they are looking to change the behaviour of the fishers themselves. Two standout examples are OzFish Unlimited in Australia and Keep Fish Wet in the United States. These are still driven by a 'cause' to gather a following but tend not to work on a membership-based levy to fund, rather relying on donations and industry/trade partnerships with individuals and businesses that are supportive or share the common vision of the programs.

The common business model for all of the aforementioned programs is establishing as a Not-For-Profit (NFP), rather than a For-Profit (FP).



NOT-FOR-PROFIT GOVERNANCE

The not-for-profit sector makes an enormous contribution to Australia's social and economic welfare. Not-for-profits protect our environment, educate our students, enable us to practice our faith, celebrate our cultural heritage, and protect the most vulnerable in our community. Over a history of more than 200 years, not-for-profits have been a powerful and positive influence on the development of Australian society (AICD 2019).

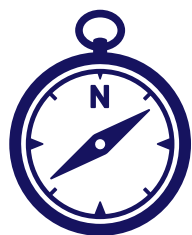
The Tuna Champions steering committee (Appendix 1), deliberated on the most appropriate structure to take the program forward as a sustainable model and decided that a NFP governance structure would be most appropriate based on the values and intentions of the program.

The Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) provides an excellent working example of the principles of an effective NFP. The program will look to transition to an NFP during 2024. Through a generous donation from the Ocean Health Foundation, we will engage a legal firm to inform on the appropriate and correct configuration of the Tuna Champions NFP based on the AICD principles.

A central tenet of the Tuna Champions program is important that the program does not get embedded into political or management agendas as this weakens the value of the principles behind the strategic design to focus on angler led stewardship. It is difficult to contest that reducing wastage of an iconic species if harvested or giving a fish the best chance of survival if releasing it is a positive move. However, using the program for political leverage or confounding the message with regulatory management will alienate some, subsequently slowing or hindering the momentum of increased stewardship.

To achieve this, the program has operated under the direction of a Steering Committee (Appendix 1). The steering committee is composed of members from a range of backgrounds including scientists, Federal Government representatives and recreational fishery peak body representatives. During the history of the program the steering committee has only required to provide a light touch as the same team has managed the program from its inception and have managed the program to focus on the core principles and not allow it to drift towards a direction that would have negatively impacted the program. As the governance and management structure of the program could potentially vary moving forward, protecting the focussed direction of the program will be critical to maintain the momentum that has been achieved. An NFP provides for a governance structure that will facilitate this stability.

Rather than a steering committee an NFP is governed by a Board and Director. The composition of this Board will need to be carefully considered and driven by input from the Steering Committee and with guidance from legal counsel and directed by the AICD principles two, three and four.



Principle 1

Purpose and strategy

The organisation has a clear purpose and a strategy which aligns its activities to its purpose

- 1.1 The organisation's purpose is clear, recorded in its governing documents and understood by the board
- 1.2 The board approves a strategy to carry out the organisation's purpose
- 1.3 Decisions by the board further the organisation's purpose and strategy
- 1.4 The board regularly devotes time to consider strategy
- 1.5 The board periodically reviews the purpose and strategy



Principle 2

Roles and responsibilities

There is clarity about the roles, responsibilities and relationships of the board

- 2.1 Directors' roles are clear and understood by the board
- 2.2 Directors understand and meet their duties under the law
- 2.3 Directors meet any eligibility requirements relevant to their position
- 2.4 Delegations of the board's authority are recorded and periodically reviewed
- 2.5 The role of the board is clearly delineated from the role of management



Principle 3

Board composition

The board's structure and composition enable it to fulfil its role effectively

- 3.1 Directors are appointed based on merit, through a transparent process, and in alignment with the purpose and strategy
- 3.2 Tenure of directors is limited to encourage renewal and staggered to retain corporate knowledge
- 3.3 The board reflects a mix of personal attributes which enable it to fulfil its role effectively
- 3.4 The board assesses and records its members' skills and experience, and this is disclosed to stakeholders
- 3.5 The board undertakes succession planning to address current and future skills needs in alignment with the purpose and the strategy



Principle 4

Board effectiveness

The board is run effectively and its performance is periodically evaluated

- 4.1 Board meetings are chaired effectively and provide opportunity for all directors to contribute
- 4.2 Directors seek and are provided with the information they need to fulfil their responsibilities
- 4.3 Directors are appropriately inducted and undertake ongoing education to fulfil their responsibilities
- 4.4 The board's performance, as well as the performance of its chair and other directors, is periodically evaluated
- 4.5 The relationship between the board and management is effective



Principle 5

Risk management

Board decision making is informed by an understanding of risk and how it is managed

- 5.1 The board oversees a risk management framework that aligns to the purpose and strategy
- 5.2 Directors seek and are provided with information about risk and how it is managed
- 5.3 The board periodically reviews the risk management framework



Principle 6

Performance

The organisation uses its resources appropriately and evaluates its performance

- 6.1 The board oversees appropriate use of the organisation's resources
- 6.2 The board approves an annual budget for the organisation
- 6.3 The board receives and considers measures which evaluate performance against the strategy
- 6.4 The board oversees the performance of the CEO
- 6.5 The board monitors the solvency of the organisation



Principle 7

Accountability and transparency

The board demonstrates accountability by providing information to stakeholders about the organisation and its performance

- 7.1 The organisation's governing documents and policies relevant to its governance are available to stakeholders
- 7.2 The board oversees appropriate reporting to stakeholders about the organisation's performance and financial position
- 7.3 Transactions between related parties, if any, are disclosed to stakeholders
- 7.4 Directors' remuneration and other benefits, if any, are disclosed to stakeholders
- 7.5 Members have the opportunity to ask questions about how the organisation is run and to hold the board to account for their decisions



Principle 8

Stakeholder engagement

There is meaningful engagement of stakeholders and their interests are understood and considered by the board

- 8.1 The board understands who the organisation's stakeholders are, their needs and their expectations
- 8.2 The board oversees a framework for the meaningful engagement of stakeholders
- 8.3 Stakeholders are considered in relevant board decision making
- 8.4 There is a process for gathering and responding to complaints and feedback from stakeholders
- 8.5 The board oversees a framework for how the organisation works with and protects vulnerable people



Principle 9

Conduct and compliance

The expectations of behaviour for the people involved in the organisation are clear and understood

- 9.1 The board articulates its expectations of conduct, and the consequences for misconduct, for the people involved with the organisation
- 9.2 The board oversees compliance with relevant laws, regulations and internal policies
- 9.3 Conflicts of interest are identified, disclosed and managed
- 9.4 There is a process for investigating misconduct and relevant instances are brought to the attention of the board



Principle 10

Culture

The board models and works to instil a culture that supports the organisation's purpose and strategy

- 10.1 The board defines and models a desired culture that aligns to the purpose and strategy
- 10.2 The board oversees a strategy to develop and maintain the desired culture
- 10.3 The board oversees mechanisms to monitor and evaluate organisational culture
- 10.4 The organisation's values are clear, periodically reviewed and communicated to stakeholders
- 10.5 The board oversees a framework for the reward and recognition of workers

WAYS TO GENERATE INCOME WITH TO SUPPORT THE TUNA CHAMPIONS NFP

There will be a need to generate sufficient revenue to support at least one staff member to manage the program communication channels and the core initiatives of the program, including the Ambassador program, Golden Charter Operator program and Scientific Angler program.

The Tuna Champions branded merchandise is an opportunity to generate revenue but would also require human resource support to continue this and ideally grow it to increase sales. Further, and NFP opens opportunity for donations at a range of scales from small scale donations from fishers directly to larger philanthropic funding, as recently realised by a donation from the Ocean Health Foundation.

Talk nights are also an opportunity to generate revenue. Primarily through appearance fees, which are commonly provided by Game Fishing clubs around Australia. A secondary source of revenue from talk nights is live access to merchandise sales rather than online sales. We have found that these evenings are far more successful to increase sales than online marketing strategies. Again, however, this requires financial support to fund the travel and human resource required. As such, the Board will be tasked with developing and managing the financial strategies of the NFP going forward which will be actioned by the Director.

IS THERE A PATHWAY TO TAKE TUNA CHAMPIONS WORLDWIDE?

Another avenue of increasing revenue to support operations is to expand the market through globalisation. The inclusion of Yellowfin Tuna as a focus species provides opportunity for TC to expand globally and reach markets such as New Zealand, Pacific Islands, United States many European nations that are developing recreational fisheries for Atlantic Bluefin Tuna with recent changes in the migratory path of this species through Europe and significant drive from the recreational sector to realise the opportunities of developing recreational fisheries, although heavily regulated. Adopting the positive stewardship ethos and practices of the Tuna Champions program is likely to facilitate confidence from governing bodies in these fisheries that fishers are aiming to minimise their impact and are cognisant of the need to be accountable for minimising their impacts as these fisheries develop. Beyond the potential to generate social licence to operate these fisheries, the early adoption of the Tuna Champions guidelines will have direct benefit to the fish and fisheries that are early adopters.

One of the most viable methods of education dissemination through the global market is via the International Game Fishing Association (IGFA). The IGFA the largest peak body for recreational game fishing and has a presence in most countries that have recreational fisheries for tuna. Recently the IGFA has focused on angler education and improving responsible fishing practices. Further, they have recently formed regional councils that are an ideal conduit to promote the Tuna Champions program into target regions and evolve the program to create behavioural change to improved stewardship and angling practices across the globe.

The program has discussed this with the IGFA and there was strong in principal support with the IGFA offering to promote the program on their social media channels at this stage but we believe there is opportunity to strengthen and formalise this relationship to become a core education program broadcast through the IGFA.

Glossary

ABARES	Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences
AFMA	Australian Fisheries Management Authority
ARFF	Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation
DAWE	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (Australian Government)
FRDC	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation
IMAS	Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies
SBT	Southern Bluefin Tuna



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Appendix 1. Tuna Champions Steering Committee

Brett Cleary (Chair)	Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation (ARFF)
Sean Tracey (Project lead)	Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS)
Chris Izzo	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)
Andy Moore	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE)
Josh Fielding	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)
Mardi Albert	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Toby Piddocke	Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC)
Jane Gallichan	CEO – Tarfish (Tasmania)
India Thompson	Project Manager for Tuna Champions
Mat Kertesz	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF)
Alex Millar	Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources (DISER)

