EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As NT Chief Minister Paul Henderson wrote recently, “The Daly River is one of the best fishing rivers in the world.” This is not an exaggeration but a range of factors are posing a potential threat to this fishery and AFANT has been urging the NT Government to take action to ensure that the quality of recreational fishing is protected for the future. Most recently (November 2008) we did this in a meeting with Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis and he requested we prepare this submission for his consideration.

All indications are that recreational fishing effort in the area is currently increasing and most local NT fishers are concerned to ensure continued high-quality lure fishing in the lower river. AFANT and many others believe that it is now necessary to take urgent steps to reduce the impact of both commercial and recreational fishers on the Daly River.

Many recreational fishers and others associated with the industry are deeply concerned that the combined fishing pressure from both the commercial and recreational sectors may have reached, or may soon reach, unsustainable levels of fishing pressure overall. While we are proposing a number of measures designed to reduce the impact of recreational fishers we believe that it will not be possible to ensure sustainable fish stocks into the future unless measures are also put in place to reduce the impact of commercial fishing. We are therefore proposing that, accompanied by an appropriate buy back of commercial barramundi licences, the current commercial fishing closure line be moved to a location which does ensure that the Daly River’s barramundi stocks are not subject to high-level commercial exploitation.
To reduce the impact of recreational barramundi harvesting we are recommending the introduction of a two barramundi possession limit for the whole of the Daly catchment. We are also recommending a range of measures to reduce both the impact of recreational harvesting on the river’s cherabin population and the impact of using cherabin as live bait on the barramundi stocks.

To avoid concentration of recreational fishing effort in a few confined areas we are recommending the opening up new areas to better disburse recreational fishers through the Daly River system. This will have an added benefit of reducing instances of angler conflict and will also increase boat safety in the system. For similar reasons, we are also recommending that the current seasonal closure for recreational fishing on the lower Daly be removed.

In summary, we have recommended as follows:

**Recommendation 1.**
That the NT Government, in conjunction with the buy-backs of commercial barramundi licences, move the commercial barramundi closure outside the Daly River to a line extending from Cape Ford to North Peron Island and then to Bul Gul. (Approximate coordinates 13 26 23.81 129 54 01.74 to 13 05 14.43 130 00 49.32 to 13 05 20.95 130 07 06.27.)

**Recommendation 2.**
That the NT Government introduces a possession limit of two barramundi for the whole of the Daly River catchment.

**Recommendation 3.**
For the Daly River catchment, that the NT Government immediately limits the number of freshwater pots that can be used to one pot per person only.

**Recommendation 4.**
For the Daly River catchment, that the NT Government immediately limits the size of freshwater pots that can be used to 0.15 m$^3$ and regulate that the entrances to all such pots should be restricted by turtle excluder rings of no more than 85 mm in diameter.

**Recommendation 5.**
For the Daly River catchment, that the NT Government immediately implements a possession limit 10 cherabin per person.

**Recommendation 6.**
That the NT Government introduces regulations prohibiting the use of live bait below the Daly River Crossing to an appropriate line below Palmerston Island.

**Recommendation 7.**
That the NT Government takes urgent action to secure access to larger fishable billabongs in the Daly River area such as those on Elizabeth Downs Station.

**Recommendation 8.**
That the NT Government provides a new access road (most likely through or immediately adjacent to Tipperary Station) to provide access for smaller boats to the section of the Daly River above Daly River Crossing.

**Recommendation 9.**
That the NT Government allows the use of live bait for fishing in the Daly River catchment above the Daly River Crossing.
**Recommendation 10.**
That the NT Government makes provisions so that only boats to a maximum size of 4.35 m with motors to a maximum of 25 horsepower should be permitted in the section of the Daly River between the Daly River Crossing and an appropriate point upstream of Tipperary Station.

**Recommendation 11.**
That the NT Government removes the current seasonal closure on recreational barramundi fishing in the Daly River below the entrance to Moon Billabong.

**RECREATIONAL FISHING ON THE DALY RIVER**
The Territory’s recreational fishery is centred around our icon fish — the barramundi — and the Daly River is our most important recreational barramundi fishery. Through its reputation as a top-class wild barramundi fishery it has become a national and international icon of recreational fishing.

In 2000 some 200,000 angler hours were fished in the area (28,500 days). That’s about 11% of the total recreational fishing effort in the NT making this the third most fished area after Darwin Harbour and the Mary River. In the same year some 74,000 barramundi were captured by recreational fishers in the area compared to 28,000 in Darwin Harbour and 70,000 in the Mary River. Of the barramundi caught in the Daly, 58,000 or 78% were released.

In April/May each year two major internationally-recognised fishing tournaments are held on the Daly — the NT Barra Nationals and the NT Barra Classic. These tournaments attract a higher level of media coverage than any other fishing events in the country. Combined they involve some 100 teams of three people fishing tag and release for barramundi only for five 10 hour days. That’s 15,000 hours fishing just in these two tournaments.

There is some 20 years of tagging catch and release data available from the Barra Classic making it one of the longest duration consistent recreational fishing data sets in Australia. The NT Barra Classic in particular has set the standard for responsible fishing tournament organisation and its format has been much copied. It holds a five-star rating (the highest possible) under Recfish Australia’s National Environmental Assessment of Tournament Fishing (NEATFish) assessment program.

**Fishing Tourism on the Daly River**
With the possible exception of Kakadu National Park, there are now more lodges and caravan/camping parks at Daly River than any other Top End location outside Darwin and Katherine. In 2005/06 Daly River had 58,000 visitors staying for just over two days on average (Tourism NT Figures). Virtually all visitors are there for the barramundi fishing.

The sealing of the road to Daly River has made the venue a major attraction for ‘grey nomad’ tourists who are now increasing fishing effort through the dry season which is normally only lightly-fished by NT anglers.
Environmental Issues, Development and Recreational Fishing on the Daly

For fishers, the Daly is a wild river and its barramundi fishery relies on wild fish — there is no stock augmentation nor is such a system likely. The fishery is therefore totally dependant on natural processes and human activities which disrupt these processes can pose a threat. Other factors which may be related to climate change such as increased flood flows and altered wet/dry season patterns could also adversely impact barramundi stocks. Various developments may be possible in the river’s catchment but they must be based on sound scientific understandings or undertaken with a strong precautionary approach.

A key natural process for the Daly is its year-round water flows fed from aquifers in the upper and mid catchment. Over-extraction of waters from these aquifers or the river and its feeders has the potential to significantly impact on fish breeding, feeding and habitat so it is a particular threat.

Another significant feature of the Daly is its near-pristine water quality. This is one of the things which makes it such a valuable barramundi fishery and particular care needs to be taken that chemicals and other polluting substances are prevented from entering the waterways or aquifers. This poses a real challenge for the management of horticultural and agricultural activities in the catchment.

Erosion and siltation resulting from severe flooding and inappropriate land clearing also pose a threat to the river’s fishery. Siltation is already creating navigational challenges at a number of locations in the lower river at places such as Woolianna and Brown’s Creek. Ironically, it seems likely that the current siltation issues may be the result of natural processes indicating that extreme care needs to be taken to ensure that human activity does not add to the problem.

Regardless, it would seem inevitable that the Daly River catchment will be a focus for increased development in the coming years. There is already pressure to increase land clearing, pasture improvement, horticultural expansion and plantation forestry developments. In addition, there is considerable mining exploration underway with prospects for uranium and other mineral deposits. Recently two more pastoral properties have been purchased at a reported price of $12 million for forestry development and a group of five pastoral properties in the area (including Tipperary Station) have been offered for sale at an asking price around $200 million. With such levels of investment being committed there will almost certainly be increased pressure to develop these properties to secure economic returns.

The NT Government is continuing a moratorium on land clearing in the so-called ‘focus area’ of the Daly River catchment but this is having only limited effect as it is failing to ensure a best-practice clearing approach in the rest of the catchment — particularly in the upper parts of the catchment which are known to be the source of much of the silt material now being deposited in the lower river. AFANT’s view is that the moratorium should be removed and the land clearing guidelines recommended by the Daly River Management Advisory Committee (DRMAC) should be adopted for the whole of this catchment and all other appropriate areas in the Northern Territory.

Government has also introduced a process for managing the sustainable allocation of ground water from the major aquifers that underlie the Daly catchment. A plan for water allocation from the Tindal aquifer in the upper part of the catchment is nearing
Some time ago the NT Government committed to the development of a “Living Rivers” program which would provide long-term protection to our most important rivers including the Daly but details of this program and its implementation have not yet been released. This program should be brought forward and the need to sustain recreational fishing on the Daly should be a significant consideration in it.

Finally, there is the threat of increasing fishing pressure and inappropriate fishing practices impacting on fish stocks and the quality of the fishing experience. That is the main focus of the remainder of this paper.

Fishery Impacts
The Daly River’s barramundi stocks are currently caught by both commercial and recreational fishers. Although the river itself is closed to commercial netting from a line drawn across the river mouth, there can be no dispute that both sectors are exploiting the same fish stocks. We hear anecdotal reports of increasing commercial catches from the flats outside the Daly mouth and around Anson Bay but actual catch figures as reported in commercial fishers log books are not available to us or the public due to ‘commercial in confidence’ provisions.

There is also a lack of hard data on recreational catches and harvest since the 2000/01 National Recreational Fishing Survey. We acknowledge that the NT Government has commenced the design of a similar survey to be conducted in 2009/10 but the results will not be available until 2011 and AFANT believes that there are issues of concern that must be addressed before then.

All indications are that recreational fishing effort in the area is currently increasing and most local NT fishers are concerned to ensure continued high-quality lure fishing in the river. There are also concerns that recreational fishers exploiting cherabin stocks, both for the table and to use when bait fishing for barramundi, could be adversely impacting on fish stocks.

AFANT and many others believe that it is now necessary to take urgent steps to reduce the impact of both commercial and recreational fishers on the Daly River. We are therefore recommending that the NT Government addresses the following issues as soon as possible.

Reducing Commercial Fishing Effort on Daly River Barramundi Stocks
In a letter to AFANT in July 2008 Chief Minister Paul Henderson wrote: “Perhaps most importantly the Government has acted to protect some of our best fishing areas. The Daly River is one of the best fishing rivers in the world. The Government extended the moratorium on land clearing in the Daly Catchment.”

AFANT fully acknowledges the efforts of the Government to work towards sustainable land clearing and water management practices in the Daly but, unless action is taken to
reduce pressure on the river’s barramundi stocks, one of the best fishing rivers in the world will still be at risk from overexploitation of barramundi stocks.

As stated earlier, both commercial and recreational fishers are targeting the same fish stocks in the Daly River. We are not permitted to know what the current level of commercial catch is but we suspect it is considerable and increasing. We do know that the level of recreational fishing on the Daly is increasing and many recreational fishers and others associated with the industry are deeply concerned that the two sectors combined may have reached, or may soon reach, unsustainable levels of fishing pressure overall.

Later in this paper we are proposing a raft of measures and restrictions which are explicitly designed to reduce the impact of recreational fishers and ensure that our activities on the river are sustainable into the future. It will not be possible to achieve this outcome unless measures are also put in place to reduce the impact of commercial fishing on this same fish resource.

Most recreational fishers (and possibly even the Government of the day) believed that the closure of the Daly River to commercial barramundi fishing in 1989 was intended to be a means of allocating the barramundi resource in the river to the recreational sector. In the event, the actual placement of the closure line has allowed commercial fishers to target the same fish stocks in the river mouth and on the flats adjacent to it. With this in mind, we are proposing that the current closure line be moved to a location which does ensure that the Daly River’s barramundi stocks are not subject to high-level commercial exploitation and this would mean closing all of Anson Bay. At the same time, this closure should be extended slightly to remove commercial netting from the area between Bul Gul and Channel Point which is now accessible to recreational fishers through the new Channel Point Coastal Reserve and boat ramp. We are recommending that the closure be redesignated as follows: A line using appropriate coordinates extending from the tip of Cape Ford (approx 13 26 23.81 129 54 01.74 ) to the northern tip of North Peron Island (approx 13 05 14.43 130 00 49.32) and then to a point close to the Bul Gul community (approx 13 05 20.95 130 07 06.27).

As with other processes which have the effect of reallocating fish resources between sectors, we recommend that this closure extension be accompanied by an appropriate buy back of commercial barramundi licences.

**Recommendation 1.**
That the NT Government, in conjunction with the buy-backs of commercial barramundi licences, move the commercial barramundi closure outside the Daly River to a line extending from Cape Ford to North Peron Island and then to Bul Gul. (Approximate coordinates 13 26 23.81 129 54 01.74 to 13 05 14.43 130 00 49.32 to 13 05 20.95 130 07 06.27.)

**Ensuring a conservative Approach to Barramundi Harvesting by Recreational Fishers**
The increasing recreational fishing effort in the Daly River should be matched with a more precautionary approach to harvesting barramundi by recreational fishers. Sustaining the quality of the river’s recreational barramundi fishery is a prime objective for AFANT and it should be given similar emphasis by the NT Government. We believe that
recreational barramundi catches in the lower Daly are not sustainable at current levels. Even if they are, they certainly will not be as angler effort on the river increases which it inevitably will with an increased NT population and more visitors as the area develops. We see this river now as being in a similar situation to the Mary River back in about 1988 when reduced possession limits and other measures where implemented there.

AFANT supports calls from the Daly River Tourist Group that barramundi possession limits should be reduced for this river and we are recommending that the new limit be two fish to bring it into line with the provisions currently in place for the Mary River. Also, as with the Mary, we recommend that these new limits should apply to the whole of the Daly River catchment.

Recommendation 2.
That the NT Government introduce a possession limit of two barramundi for the whole of the Daly River catchment.

Protecting the Daly River’s Cherabin Stocks
Current cherabin fishing practices on the Daly have raised a number of specific concerns including:

- the unsightly plethora of freshwater pots in the river from the crossing down to Brown’s Creek
- the apparent difficulty in ensuring fishers comply with pot limits
- fishers using home-made traps which may not comply with existing regulations and which have the potential to adversely impact on other species such as turtles
- the lack of a limit on the amount of cherabin that can be taken — which leads to real concerns that cherabin are being overfished and an important part of the barramundi food chain may be under threat
- the use of cherabin as live bait (perceived to be mostly by visiting fishers) for barramundi which makes the fish easier to catch, particularly during the dry season when, in the past, stocks were only lightly exploited at that time
- the problem of post-release survival for barramundi caught on live cherabin (usually gut hooked) — particularly fish in the sub-55 cm size range that cannot legally be retained.

The cherabin issue has become such a concern to local tourism operators that the Daly River Community Development Association has called for a complete ban on all bait fishing in the river below Daly River Crossing. Also, the Daly River Tourist Group has recently called for a reduction in barramundi possession limits and has requested an urgent meeting with the Fisheries Minister. Both groups initially supported the proposal to introduce a possession limit of 30 cherabin although we understand that many individuals now share AFANT’s view that the limit needs to be considerably less for this river.

We believe that strong action is needed to control the cherabin fishing situation on the Daly River and, while we are recommending that particular pot specifications and possession limits are implemented Territory-wide including banning the taking of berried female cherabin, we want to see additional special provisions in place for the Daly catchment. These include the immediate introduction of a one freshwater pot per person
limit, limiting the maximum size of freshwater pots that can be used in the Daly catchment to 0.15 m³ and regulating that the entrances to all such pots should be restricted by turtle excluder rings of no more than 85 mm in diameter. (It may be wise to make this pot size and ring dimension standard provisions for the whole of the Northern Territory.) We also recommend that a possession limit of 10 cherabin per person be immediately introduced for the whole of the Daly River catchment.

**Recommendation 3.**
For the Daly River catchment, that the NT Government immediately limits the number of freshwater pots that can be used to one pot per person only.

**Recommendation 4.**
For the Daly River catchment, that the NT Government immediately limits the size of freshwater pots that can be used to 0.15 m³ and regulates that the entrances to all such pots should be restricted by turtle excluder rings of no more than 85 mm in diameter.

**Recommendation 5.**
For the Daly River catchment, that the NT Government immediately implements a possession limit 10 cherabin per person.

**Reducing the Impact of Live Bait Fishing on Daly River Barramundi Stocks**

The reputation of the Daly River’s recreational barramundi fishery has grown largely on the success of lure fishing in the river below Daly River Crossing. In the past, bait fishing — usually with live cherabin — was carried out in this section of the river at a low level by some NT fishers into the dry season. The very significant increase in the number of fishing visitors to the area since the road has been sealed has seen an equally significant increase in live cherabin bait fishing. Anecdotal information is that many visiting fishers rarely lure fish and rely almost entirely on live bait. At one time there was also a high reliance on this form of fishing by a small number of fishing tour operators using the river and we believe this may be continuing — at least in the dry season. There are a number of concerns about the proliferation of this form of fishing in the lower Daly.

A significant issue is that it maintains constant fishing pressure on barramundi stocks right through the year whereas, in the past, most recreational effort only took place from the Run-off through to perhaps mid-June and then during the build up and the Wet at times when the river level is dropping. In effect the area was ‘rested’ for a large part of the year.

Another major concern is that live cherabin fishing usually results in barramundi being gut hooked. This is not a problem if the fish is to be taken for the table but it has significant implications for the post-release survival of fish that are not being taken because they may be excess to an angler’s possession limit or, more usually, because they are below the minimum legal size. With lure fishing (often now with lures fitted with barbless hooks), fish are usually hooked in the mouth or externally and are easily released. Research has shown that these fish have a high probability of post-release survival.

During the prime lure fishing period there is often conflict between bait and lure fishers in this part of the river as the different methods bring anglers into close proximity with one another and also because lure fishers traveling at speed down the river to prime
fishing areas are perceived to be a danger to bait fishers tied up to snags or anchored at various locations. The Daly isn’t a particularly wide river and it is often impossible not to pass in close proximity to bait fishers when traveling. Many of the complaints about boats being too big, too powerful and too fast stem from this although the actual wash created by today’s average barramundi fishing boat traveling at speed is far less than that from the many small underpowered dinghies that are used by many bait fishers.

The irony of all this is that anglers using cherabin as live bait could be fishing just as successfully as they are now in the river above the crossing where boat safety and angler conflict issues could be eliminated or greatly reduced. This is discussed further in the next section of this submission.

AFANT shares the view of the Daly River Community Development Association that bait fishing should not be allowed in the river from the Crossing down to an appropriate line below Palmerston Island.

Recommendation 6.
That the NT Government introduces regulations prohibiting the use of live bait below the Daly River Crossing to an appropriate line below Palmerston Island.

Opening Up New Areas and Disbursing Recreational Fishing Effort Through the Daly River System

Currently there are a range of recreational fishing issues impacting on the section of the Daly River below the Crossing. This is the accessible section of the river where tourist parks, the public boat ramp and other facilities are located. It is also the section of the river that provides the best lure fishing — particularly lure trolling. Increasing effort from recreational fishers in this part of the river is now a major concern and, while catch rates remain reasonable in good seasons, the fishing experience is being downgraded through overcrowding and occasional angler conflict.

Over recent years, improved road access to this area has seen a significant increase in the level of interstate self-drive visitors. Many are now staying in the area for extended periods of time and, while many stay throughout the dry season, a significant number are present at what is the peak time for local fishers lure fishing the river. The tourists tend to use smaller low powered boats while locals tend to operate larger high-powered and fast boats to cover the significant distances necessary to access the best lure fishing. Tourists fishers also tend to anchor and use mainly live bait to catch barramundi whilst local anglers tend to mostly troll or cast lures. As well as creating fishing conflicts, this situation has the potential to pose a real threat to navigational safety.

What is urgently needed is a means of disburse fishing effort around the lower-Daly area recognizing that, for some time to come, tourism development is likely to remain centred on the area of the river between the Crossing and Brown’s Creek. One way of spreading this fishing effort is to provide access to a number of the areas larger freshwater billabongs. There are a significant number of these that could be made accessible through pastoral properties and Aboriginal land and they have excellent recreational fisheries.

Mission Hole and the chain of billabongs on Elizabeth Downs Station are prime examples of great freshwater fisheries that are currently not available to recreational fishers despite the access provisions of the NT Pastoral Lands Act. AFANT recommends
that the NT Government takes urgent action to secure access to larger fishable billabongs in the Daly River area such as those on Elizabeth Downs Station.

For bait fishers with smaller boats, a significant length of the river above the Crossing provides ideal conditions. The problem is that a series of rock bars not far above the Crossing limits access. AFANT proposes that a new access road be opened up (most likely through or immediately adjacent to Tipperary Station) to provide access for smaller boats to this section of the river.

To make this an attractive fishing proposition for visitors with smaller boats we propose that, unlike the area below the Crossing, live bait fishing be permitted in this area.

To make the area more small-boat-friendly and to eliminate the potential danger of sharing the water with large fast boats, we propose that only boats to a maximum size of 4.35 m with motors to a maximum of 25 horsepower should be permitted in this section of the river. (This size restriction would admit most of the ‘car topper’ style vessels used by long-stay interstate fishing visitors.)

**Recommendation 7.**
That the NT Government takes urgent action to secure access to larger fishable billabongs in the Daly River area such as those on Elizabeth Downs Station.

**Recommendation 8.**
That the NT Government provides a new access road (most likely through or immediately adjacent to Tipperary Station) to provide access for smaller boats to the section of the Daly River above Daly River Crossing.

**Recommendation 9.**
That the NT Government allows the use of live bait for fishing in the Daly River catchment above the Daly River Crossing.

**Recommendation 10.**
That the NT Government makes provisions so that only boats to a maximum size of 4.35 m with motors to a maximum of 25 horsepower should be permitted in the section of the Daly River between the Daly River Crossing and an appropriate point upstream of Tipperary Station.

### Removing the Closed Season for Recreational Fishing on the Lower Daly River

The Daly is one of only two river systems in the Northern Territory which have seasonal closures for recreational barramundi fishing. Despite repeated assertions from Fisheries staff and others that these closures were put in place as sustainability measures, they were in fact put in place as part of a trade-off arrangement with commercial fishing representatives during the negotiation of the first Barramundi Management Plan back in the 1980s. (AFANT’s current Executive Officer negotiated on behalf of recreational fishers in that process.)

Many things have happened since that time including a strong trend towards a much more conservative ethos for the majority of recreational fishers which includes high levels of catch and release for barramundi (particularly for larger fish), the widespread use of barbless hooks to aid release and the implementation of fish-friendly handling methods (such as the use of fish grips and in-water release or at least only a keeping the
fish out of the water for a brief time for tagging or a photograph) which increase the prospects of post-release survival.

AFANT has long recognised that these seasonal closures are not justified on sustainability grounds and has campaigned to have them removed to reduce fishing pressure on other areas that anglers are forced into as a result of these closures. The issue was discussed extensively by the now-defunct Recreational Fishing Advisory Committee during the 1990s and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Recreational Fishing in 2000-2002. The real sustainability concern is that these closures could be jeopardising the stock health of barramundi in other systems. We have argued this issue with the current NT Government for some years now and, whenever we enquire, we are told by the Minister that he is either awaiting advice from his Department or that he will ask for such advice.

In July 2007 AFANT received a letter from the Chief Minister which included this statement: “We will also be prepared to consider any proposal from AFANT about closures impacting on recreational anglers — providing they don’t place our iconic barramundi fishery at risk.” We believe that there is no risk to the Daly’s (or the Mary’s) barramundi stocks in removing these two closures and that there is a greater risk to other areas if they are not removed. It is time to honour the Chief Minister’s commitment.

Although the Mary River is not the subject of this submission, the seasonal closure for recreational barramundi fishing below Shady Camp barrage should also be removed as part of this process.

**Recommendation 11.**

That the NT Government removes the current seasonal closure on recreational barramundi fishing in the Daly River below the entrance to Moon Billabong.

**Angler Education and Enforcement**

The changes recommended in this document will need to be accompanied by an ongoing program providing clear information to anglers fishing in the Daly River catchment. This should take the form of an initial public information campaign using media and appropriate print advertising. It should be followed up with the provision of angler information material which is distributed through fishing clubs, tackle stores and appropriate tourist services. New angler information signage will also be required.

AFANT believes that funding for this process could be provided from the money being made available for fishing infrastructure which we have already suggested should be more appropriately badged as “recreation fishing development” funding.

At least in the first couple of years under the new provisions, regular angler information and ‘compliance’ visits should be made by Fisheries personnel and officers from the Police Fisheries Marine Enforcement Unit.

Initially the approach should be to educate anglers but there will be a need to step up enforcement activities on the Daly River to deal with any blatant breaches of the new regulations. This is likely to have resource implications for the PFMEU and local Daly River Police in both the short and long term.
Conclusion

The status of the Daly as a world class recreational fishery is far too important not to take a precautionary approach to its management. We doubt there is anyone, be they recreational fisher, commercial fisher, Daly tourist operator, fisheries manager or NT politician who does not agree that action is necessary and that it is needed quickly.

To better facilitate the changes we are recommending here, Government may wish to consider the creation of a Daly River Fish Management Zone within which the new provisions will apply. This zone should cover all of the Daly River catchment (an area already defined by Government) and it should extend out to the recommended new commercial closure line across the mouth of Anson Bay.

We have made a number of recommendations here which we believe will ensure a sustainable future for this fishery and we are committed to consider future changes should circumstances indicate they are required. We strongly urge the NT Government to act now so that in 20 years time the NT’s Chief Minister will still be able to say “The Daly River is one of the best fishing rivers in the world.”