

Media Release

15 July 2026

Council to request Minister establish no fishing zone around C.Y. O'Connor Beach engineered fringing reef

The City of Cockburn will act on the wishes of its community and request the Fisheries Minister establish a 50m no fishing zone around the engineered fringing reef at C. Y. O'Connor Beach.

Following extensive community consultation, 68 per cent of 364 submissions received from the public supported a no fishing zone surrounding the reef and extending to the shoreline.

Common reasons for support of the no fishing zone included:

- Increased safety, by removing the risk of accidental harm from fishing hooks or spear guns and reducing the perceived risk of shark attraction
- Protection for marine habitat, allowing it to thrive
- An enhanced snorkelling and diving experience due to an increase in marine habitat.

Thirty one per cent of consultation submissions did not support the establishment of a no fishing zone, citing:

- The reef was publicly funded and should be shared and accessible for all
- Reduced fishing location options
- Impact on teaching children how to fish and/or spearfish
- Loss of recreational enjoyment.

The Minister for Fisheries Jackie Jarvis and the state Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development will be the final decision-makers on any proposed no fishing zone at the popular reef.

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Mayor Logan Howlett said the no fishing zone was proposed to protect users of the reef for passive recreational purposes, making it safe and sustainable for current and future generations.

“We want to create a ‘fringing reef sanctuary’ by extending the no fishing zone to the shoreline to resolve any potential confusion about the zone’s boundaries,” Mayor Howlett said.

“This modification will allow for signage to be installed on the beach to mark the beginning and end of the sanctuary.

“This zone would be consistent with the Omeo Dive Trail at Port Coogee which has undertaken the same process to protect swimmers, divers and snorkellers.”

Both the WA Fishing Industries Council and Recfishwest were sought for feedback to the proposal, with only the latter providing a submission, against the proposal.

Marine biodiversity at the engineered fringing reef site has increased significantly. Before the reef was installed, surveys recorded only 29 fish species, which has increased by 134 per cent to 68 species in the last survey in 2025.

The number of unique fish species recorded during surveys at the reef after its installation amount to 81.

Observations of non-fish fauna at the site, including mollusc, starfish, sea urchin, sea anemone and jellyfish, have also resulted in the identification of 64 species, with a further 32 identified to genus only.

More marine biodiversity surveys are planned for late 2026.

“The reef also attracts mammals with pods of dolphins observed at the reef most days before 9am and sea lions also observed,” Mayor Howlett said.

“There are also numerous rays and octopuses found amongst the reef. Although the primary purpose of the installation of the reef may have been for the purpose of ameliorating coastal erosion, another reason the reef was established was to trial how well it mimics nature and to what extent biodiversity around the reef can flourish.”



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Cockburn Council resolved to submit the request to the Fisheries Minister, at its Ordinary Council Meeting on 14 July.

ENDS

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