

SUGGESTED METHODS TO HANDLE FISH THAT ARE TO BE LATER RELEASED.

- Use tackle that will land a fish quickly to minimize exhaustion. However, avoid bringing in the fish too quickly as this may increase the risk of damage from the fish thrashing about once landed.
- Use artificial lures, with barbless hooks where possible, as this results in fewer fish being gut hooked and hooks are easier to remove without further damage to the fish thus reduces the time the fish is out of the water.
- For bait fishing use circle style hook patterns to maximise the likelihood of the hook being lodged in the jaw and not the gut.
- Use a de-hooker, such as long nose pliers or a hook-out, for quick removal of hooks.
- If the fish has swallowed the hook do not attempt to remove it, cut the line off as close to the hook or mouth as possible. Most hooks will be dislodged by the fish or break down with time.
- Use a knotless landing net as this removes less slime and reduces time out of the water. Gaffs should never be used on fish to be released.
- Use a fish grip device to assist in handling a fish for release, but always with the fish's body fully supported by your other hand.
- Do not place fish on a hot, dry surface for hook removal, use a wet towel on which to rest the fish and use wet hands or wet gloves when handling it.
- Do not put your fingers inside the gill cover or eye sockets of fish.
- Direct sunlight can damage fish eyes so ensure that their eyes are shaded during time out of the water.
- Large fish should have their body fully supported at all times to avoid damage to internal organs which may result from the fish being held upright by the jaw. The best method is to place a hand under the stomach while the fish is still in the water and take the weight off the hook and line.
- Fish should be released by carefully placing them head first back into the water. Some fish may need to be swum around to promote water flow over the gills to ensure survival. Do not just throw fish overboard or into a live fish tank.
- Live fish tanks or wells should be round in shape where possible, hold enough water to cover at least twice the height of the fish in the tank, have an aerating system to oxygenate the water, even with an air stone or bilge circulating pump, half of the water in the container should be changed at half hourly intervals to ensure optimum water temperature and cleanliness.
- These live fish containers must be kept out of the sun or be insulated such as an esky. For Bream, Bass and whiting a 50lt esky should be satisfactory. For Flathead, trumpeter and cod that are longer fish, a rectangle esky longer than the fish's length can be used, e.g 70-100lt esky.
- Do not overcrowd your live fish well/container. 3 nice Bream in a 50 lt esky is about all that a standard aerator and regular water changes would keep in healthy condition.
- Have a 4lt ice cream billy or small bucket that will fit inside your live fish container to assist with the half hourly water changes.
- Practice these methods on all fish you plan on returning to the water, and future stocks will surely benefit from your appropriate angling actions.