

Artificial Reef Feasibility Study

Community Survey Results

February 2026



Thank you for responding!

We recently conducted a survey to understand whether the Western Australian community support the installation of new artificial reefs in and around Cockburn Sound, what purpose they should serve, and which locations are preferred.

Artificial reefs are human made structures placed in aquatic environments to mimic the functions of natural reefs. They can be used to create habitat for marine life, support biodiversity, and help reduce coastal erosion, while also supporting recreational fishing and diving. They can be constructed from a range of materials such as limestone or concrete depending on their purpose and location.

As part of Westport's commitment to enhancing the long-term health of Cockburn Sound, we are using science from the [Western Australian Marine Science Institution](#) (WAMSI) and community and stakeholder feedback to assess whether placing artificial reefs in the area can deliver local environmental and social benefits. This is one small and early component of our holistic, whole-of-ecosystem approach to restoration, by focusing on healthy, resilient habitats that support marine life, recreational access and community values.

The survey ran from 20 June to 19 September 2025, receiving 429 responses. This summary report brings together the feedback we heard from the diving, snorkelling, fishing, sailing, and general recreational community who use Cockburn Sound.

Westport is the State Government's planning program to resolve Western Australia's future container trade constraints by relocating container trade from Fremantle to Kwinana. This includes new container port facilities in the Kwinana Industrial Area, supported by an upgraded road, rail and logistics network. Westport has committed to plan, build and operate the most sustainable port in Australia, supporting the long-term health of Cockburn Sound.

Next steps

Further technical work and consultation will be undertaken in 2026 to inform future planning and design stages.

If you would like to stay updated on the progress of this feasibility study, please click [here](#) and subscribe to Westport's Cockburn Sound Consultation Hub updates.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to complete the survey.



Subscribe to the
Cockburn Sound
Consultation Hub.

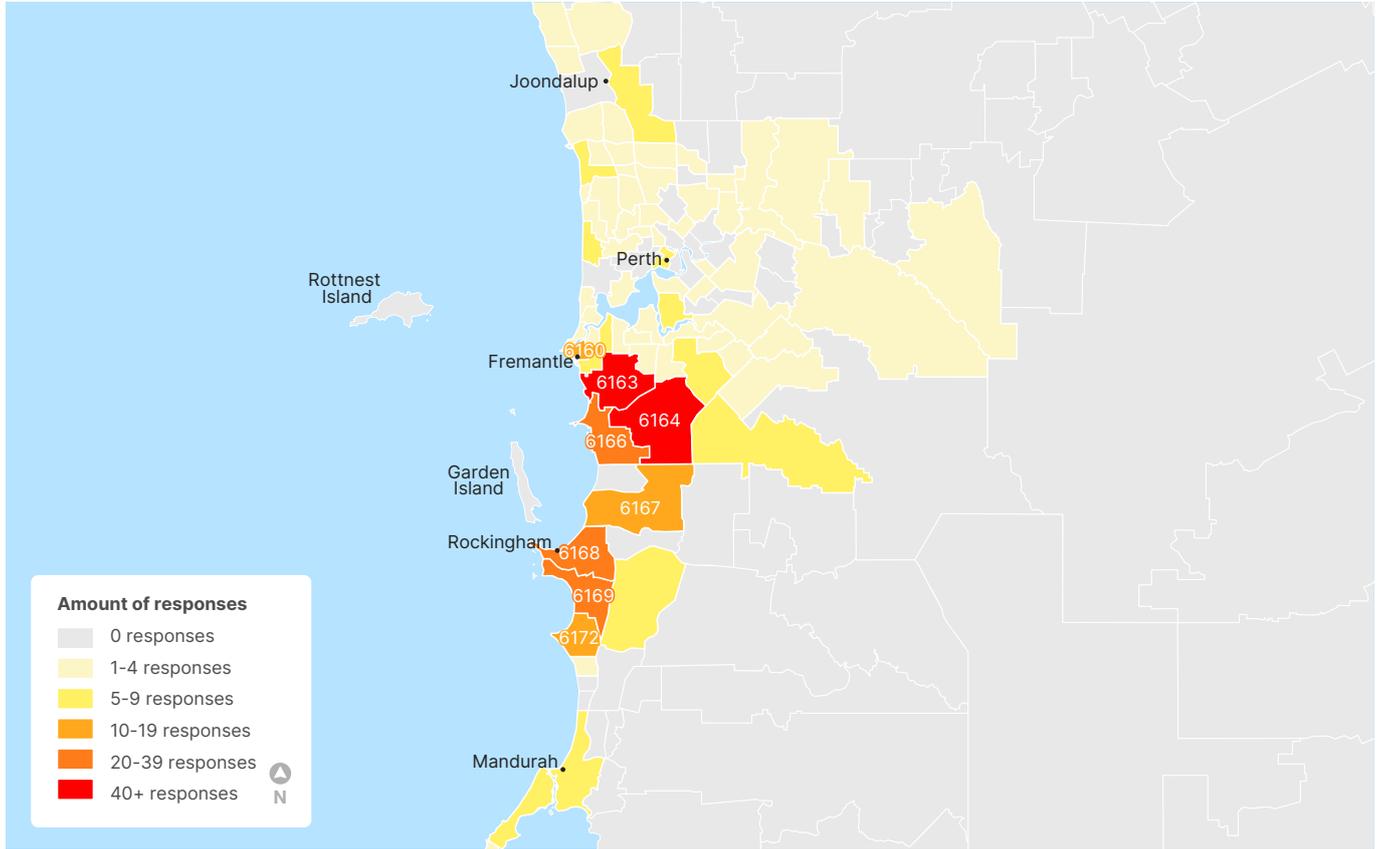
Disclaimer: No questions in this survey were mandatory to complete, which has resulted in a slight variability in the response numbers to each question.



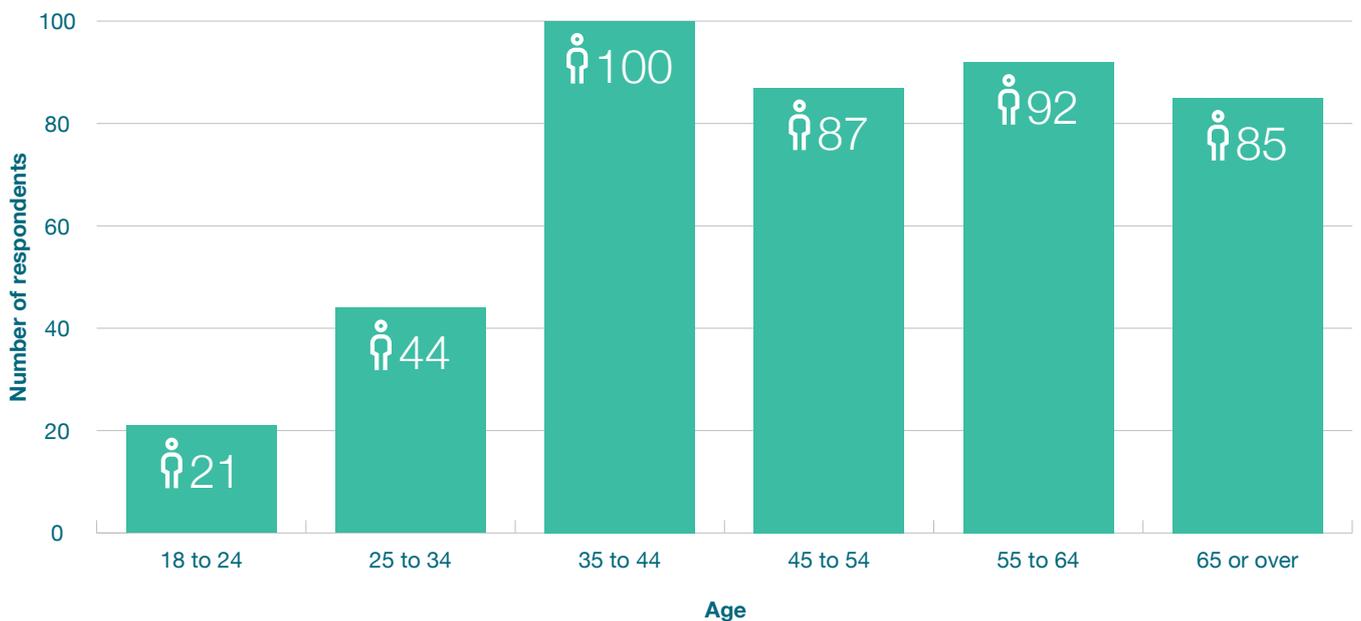
Results

Question 1: Respondent postcode

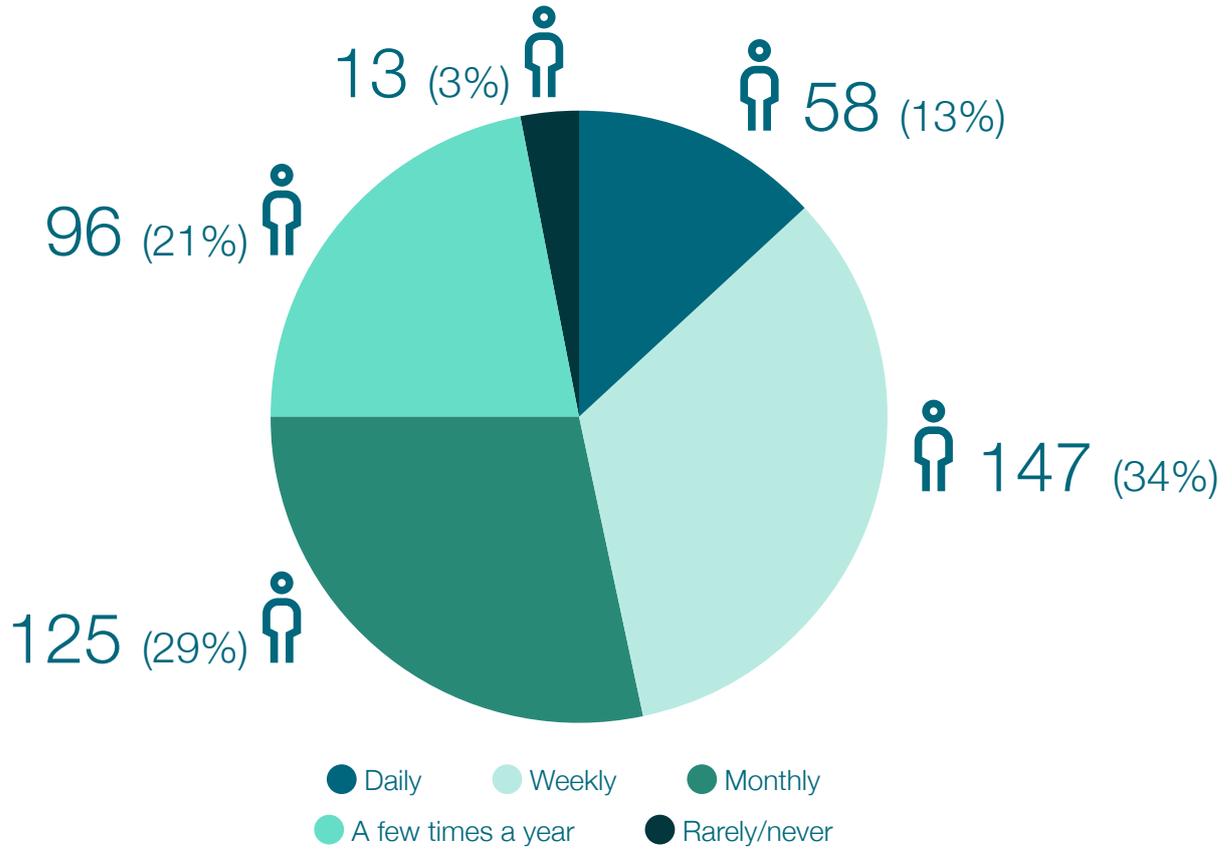
Respondents represented 78 distinct postcodes. The highest participation was observed in suburbs within the City of Cockburn, particularly Bibra Lake, Coolbellup, Hamilton Hill, Hilton, and Spearwood. Strong engagement was also recorded in the City of Rockingham, with notable responses from Safety Bay, Shoalwater, Waikiki, and Warnbro.



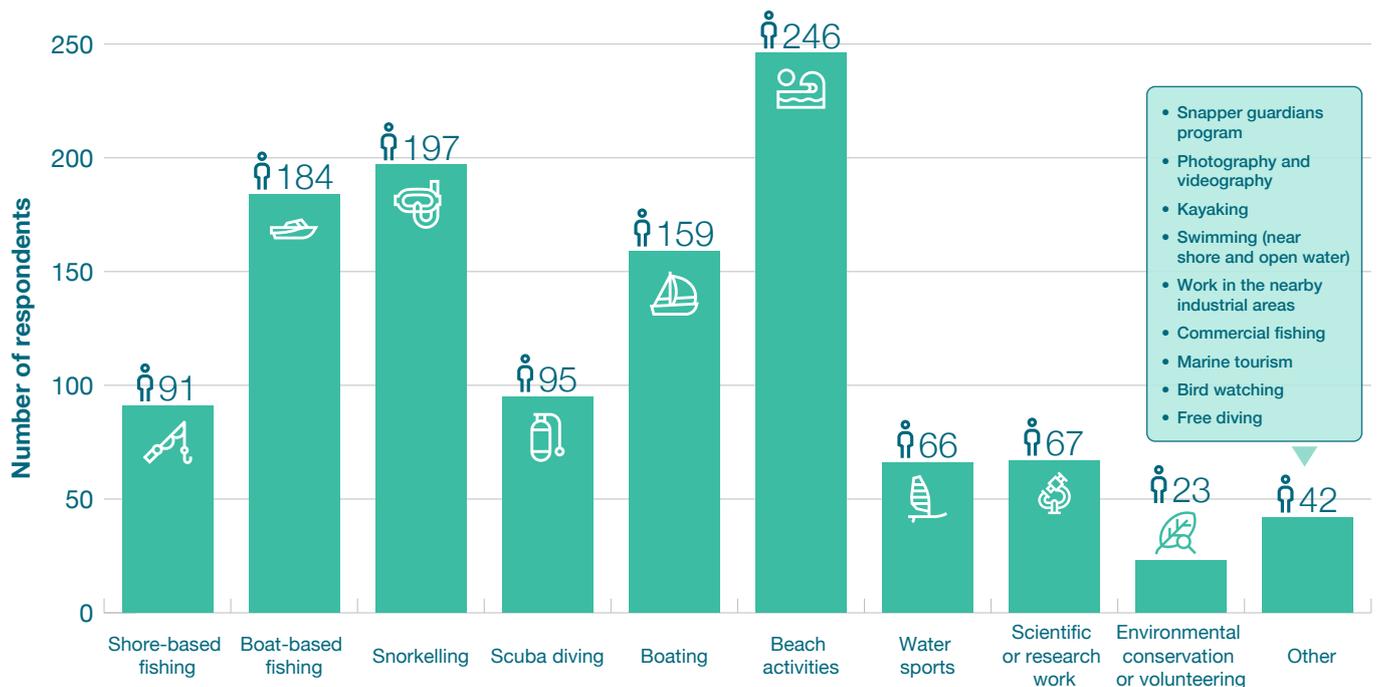
Question 2: Respondent age



Question 3: How often do you use or visit Cockburn Sound?



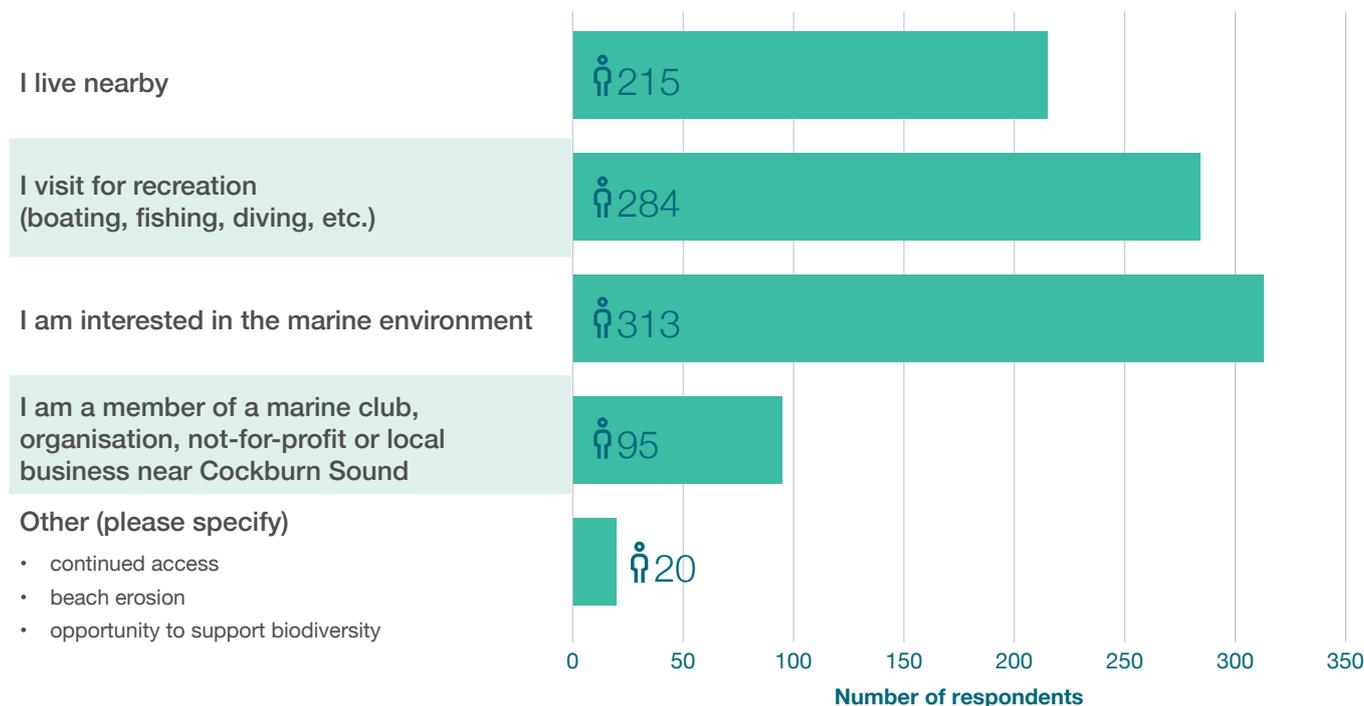
Question 4: What are the main activities that bring you to Cockburn Sound?



Note: respondents were able to provide more than one response to this question.



Question 5: Which of the following best describes your interest in this survey?



Question 6: What are your thoughts on artificial reefs? Do you believe they offer benefits for the marine environment and recreation?

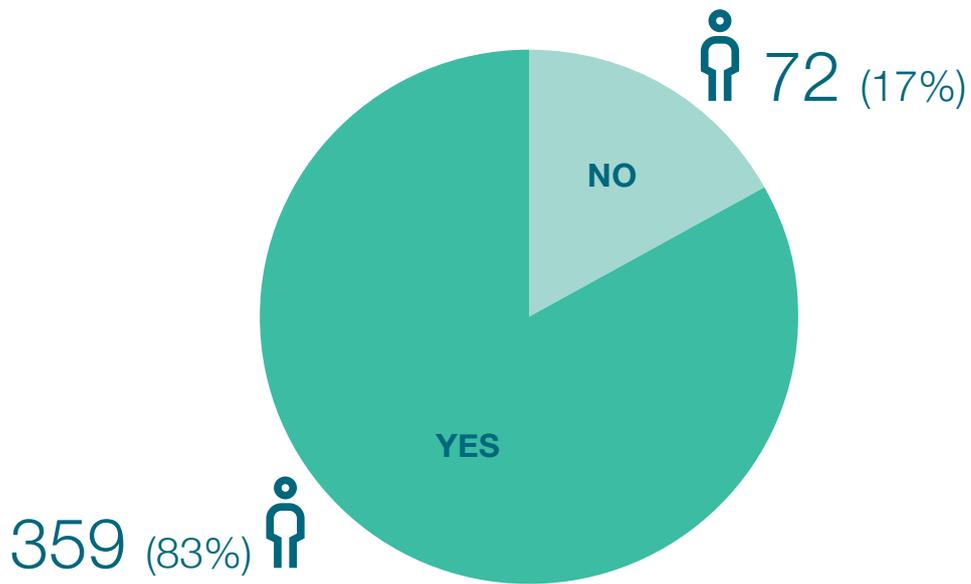
Theme	What you said
<p>Artificial reefs promote marine biodiversity</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Having swum regularly over the first artificial reef from the very beginning of its installation near Catherine Point, I have been pleasantly surprised at how quickly marine flora and sea life have populated the artificial reef” “Overseas dive destinations use artificial reefs to attract fish for their ‘House Reefs’. They create protection for smaller fish and ultimately create an ecosystem which thrives and grows in types of marine species as well as numbers of marine creatures.” “I know through many years of diving on and around artificial structures and reefs, that these attract juvenile fish as well as larger fish species, along with sponges, hydroids, crinoids, ascidians and corals and other invertebrate life” “Artificial reefs can improve biodiversity by increasing habitat availability and complexity, they are beneficial to the environment as well as recreationally.”



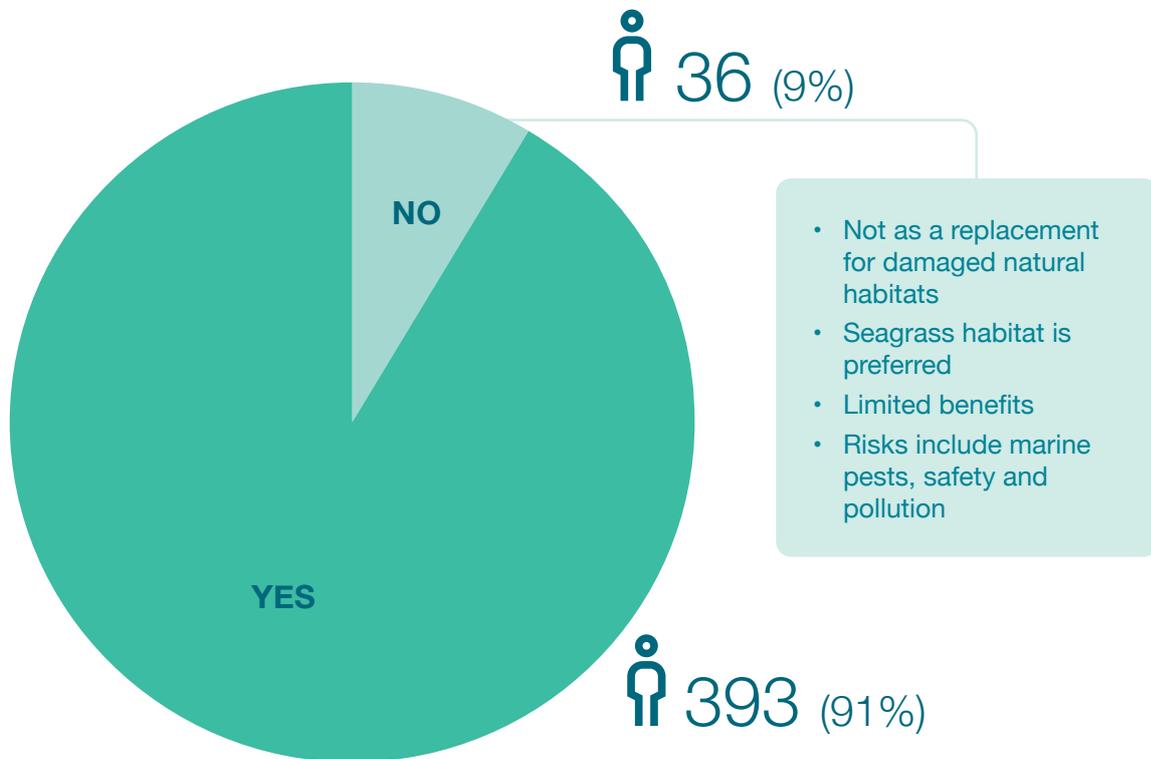
Theme	What you said
<p>Artificial reefs support the broader ecosystem</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Artificial reefs are essential to the Western Australian coastline. They are necessary to protect the existing Western Australian coastline, enhance the marine environment and provide the environment to enable our fish and other marine life to thrive.” • “I believe they may offset some of the potential for damage to marine life a new port may create. If they are established before construction and operation it would be a good thing.” • “Artificial reefs offer numerous benefits, including boosting marine biodiversity, enhancing fisheries, protecting coastlines, and providing recreational opportunities. They act as habitats for various marine organisms, improve water quality, and can even contribute to tourism and local economies.” • “Artificial reefs provide positive environmental outcomes including habitat creation, erosion control.”
<p>Artificial reefs are good for recreational activities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Artificial reefs are great for fishing. I have experienced great success fishing on artificial reefs in the State’s north and south.” • “...they will give small boaties access and kayak fishing an opportunity to enjoy what larger boaters get to experience in the deep.” • “They attract divers, snorkelers, and anglers, boosting local tourism and related businesses.” • “I think they are a good idea. They provide habitat for fish and crustaceans, can protect shorelines from erosion and provide opportunities for snorkelling and diving.”
<p>Artificial reefs are good for marine tourism and education</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I think they are a great idea. There are so many success stories right here in WA. It’s great news for the sea life (including breeding snapper) and would absolutely benefit tourism and the local residents.” • “Artificial reefs offer a powerful opportunity to create a more circular, integrated, and regenerative port environment. Beyond their ecological benefits, these structures could serve as interactive educational spaces—inviting the community to observe and learn about our unique marine ecosystems...” • “Yes they have their benefits for young marine creatures and can be used to educate the people about marine conservation.” • “They act as habitats for various marine organisms, improve water quality, and can even contribute to tourism and local economies.”
<p>Artificial reefs cannot be a solution for environmental damage</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, they offer benefit to the environment, but should not be to replace or substitute for damage done to ocean from development.” • “They offer limited benefits in such an area, just look at ones installed locally. Seagrasses not artificial reefs are required within this area.”



Question 7: Have you visited any existing artificial reefs in and around Cockburn Sound (e.g. Omeo Wreck and Dive Trail, CY O'Connor Artificial Reef, D9 Wreck)?

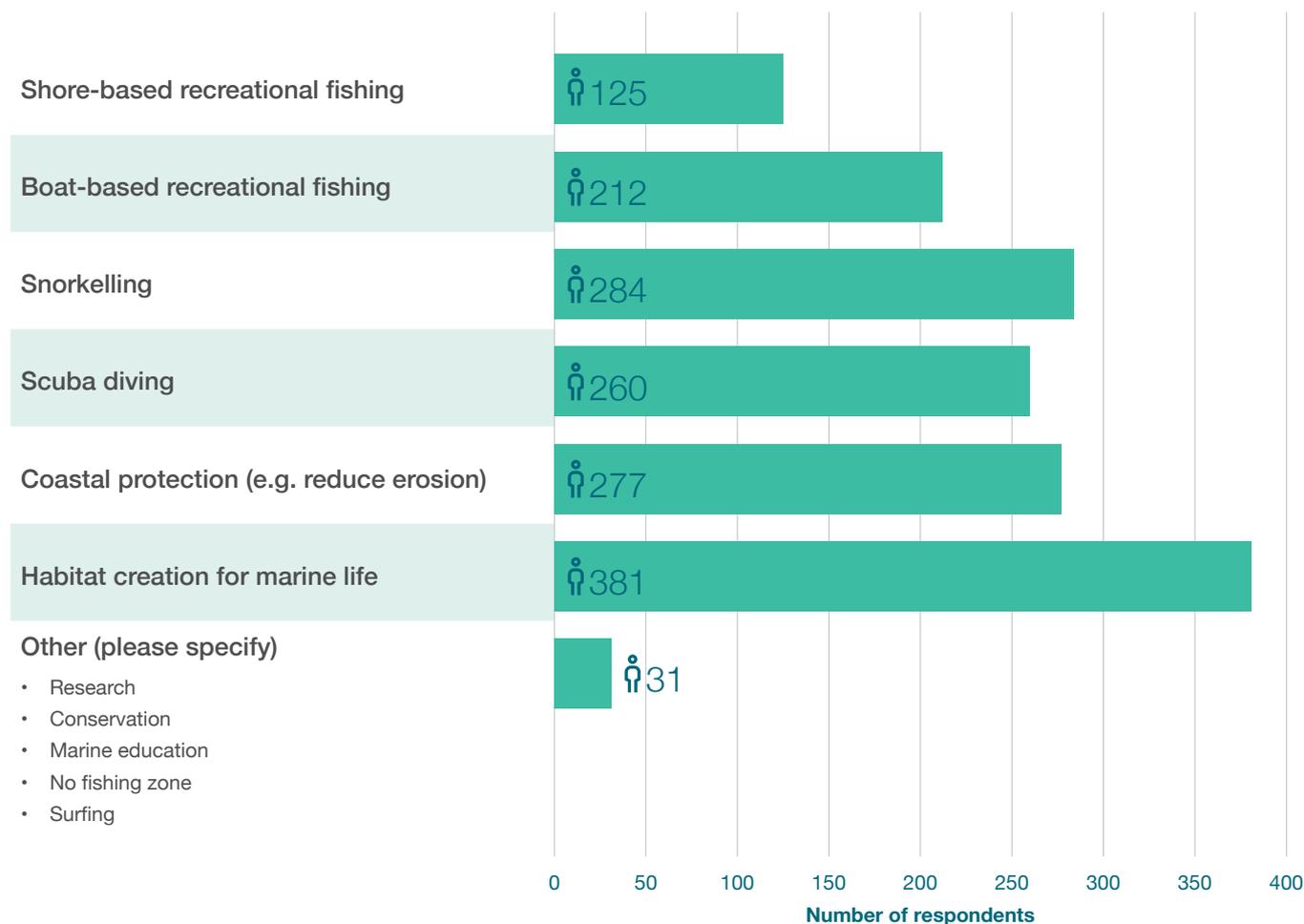


Question 8: Do you support the installation of new artificial reefs in and around Cockburn Sound?





Question 9: If new artificial reefs were installed in and around Cockburn Sound, what purpose should they serve?

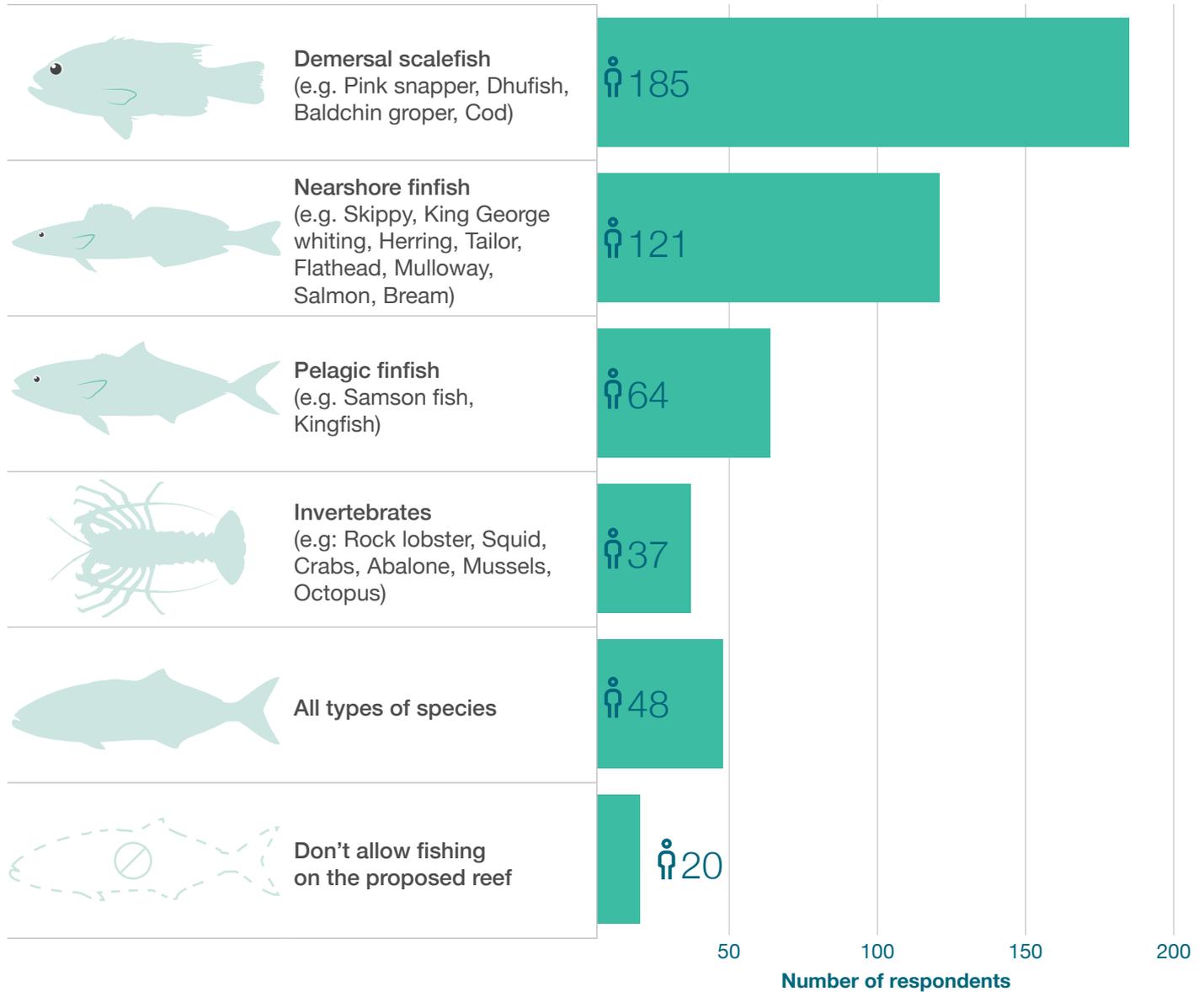


Note: respondents were able to provide more than one response to this question.



Question 10: If you selected shore-based or boat-based recreational fishing, which fish species would you like the artificial reef to attract?

Please note: This survey was conducted prior to the statewide reforms for demersal fishing in WA announced in December 2025.

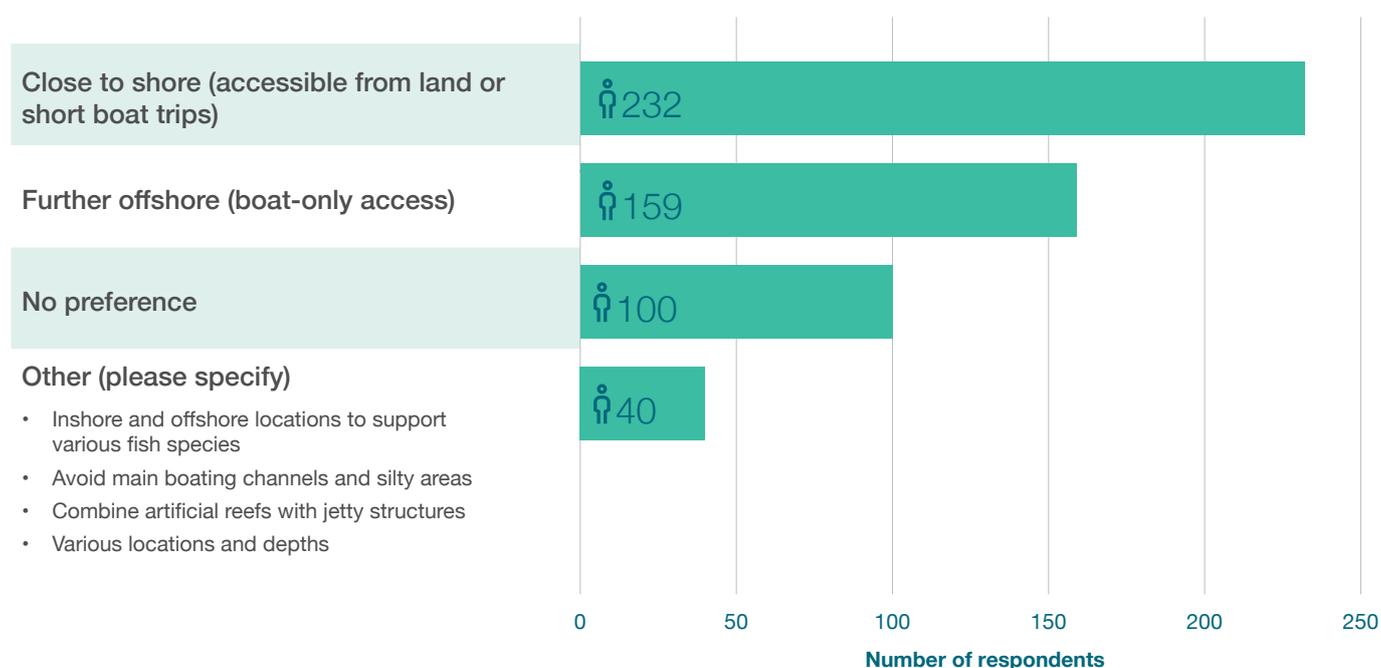


This question was open answer and respondents could name multiple species.





Question 11: Would you prefer a new artificial reef to be:

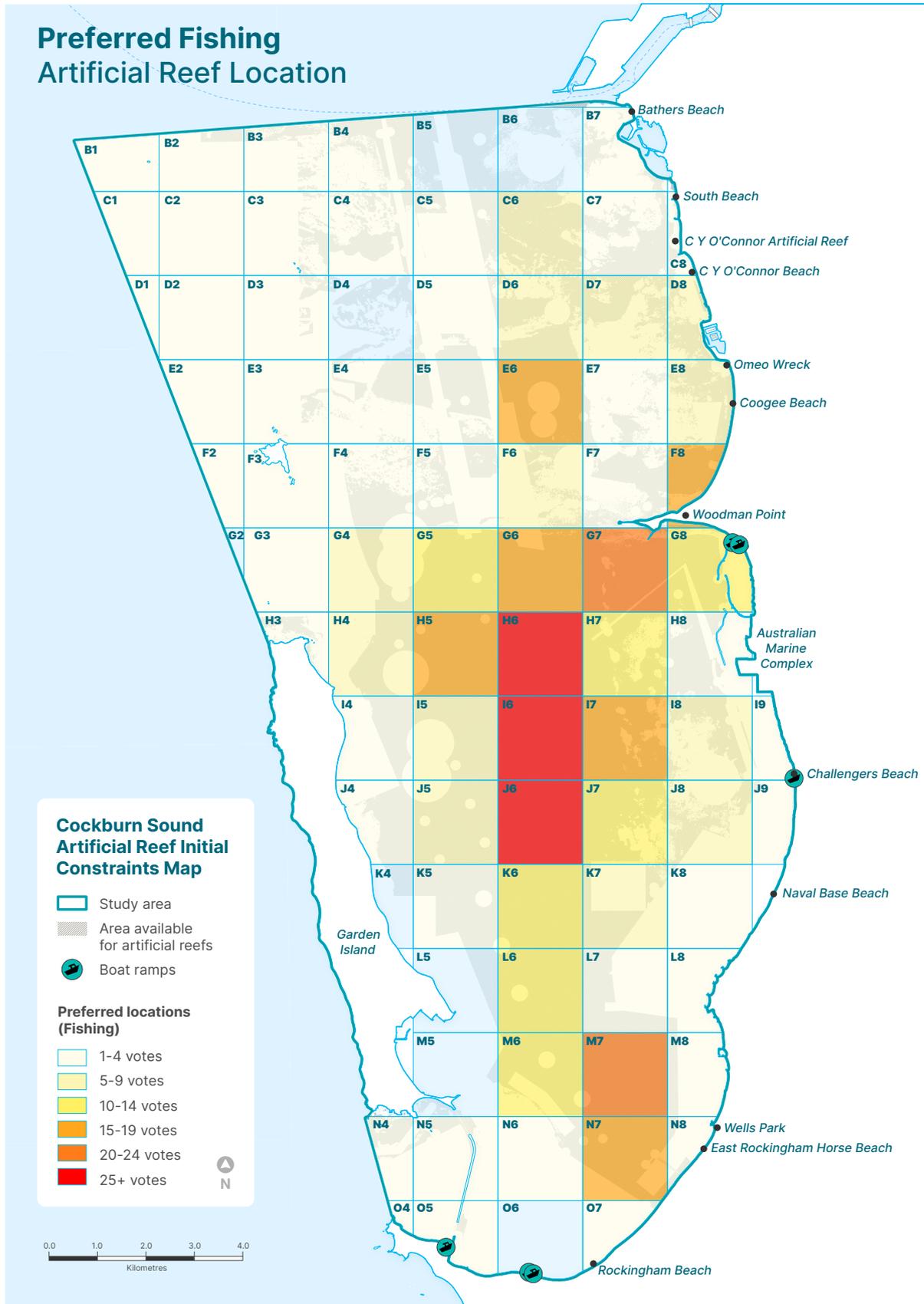


Note: respondents were able to provide more than one response to this question.



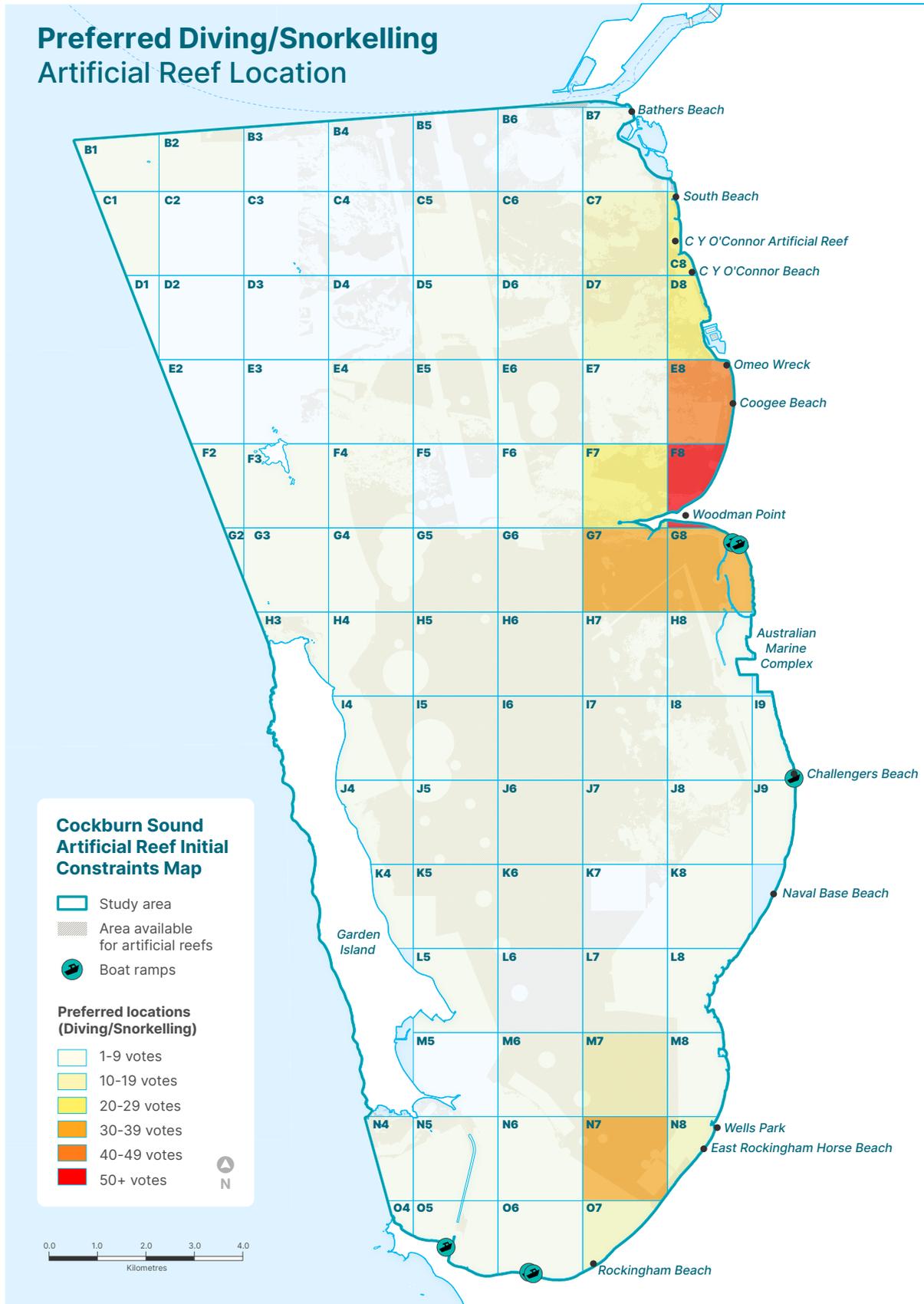
Question 12: Using the constraints map, do you have preferred locations for new artificial reefs focused on fishing? Please enter up to three relevant grid references below

Please note: Some quadrants that received votes are not available for artificial reefs - see grey shaded area in key.

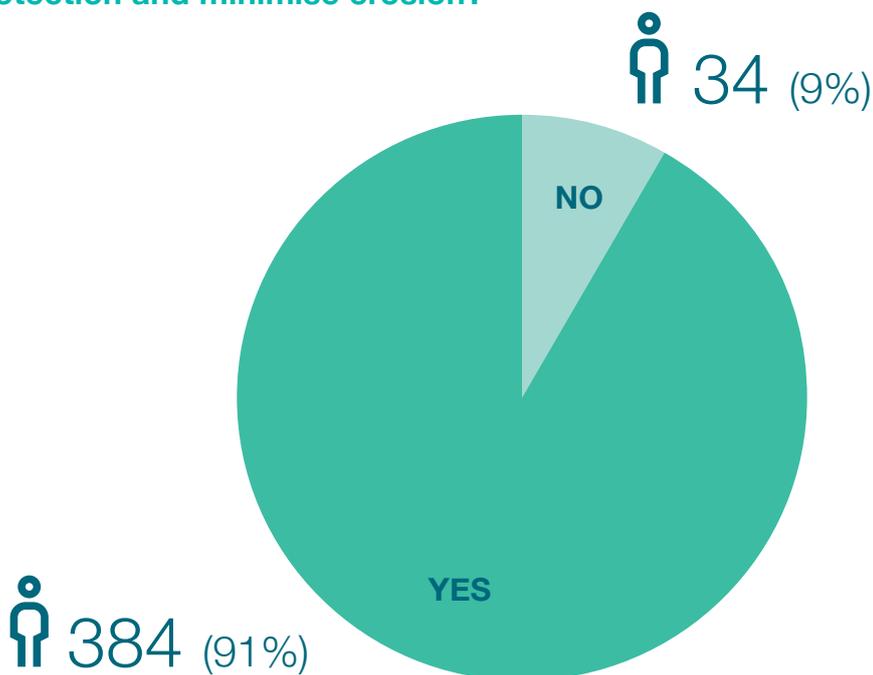


Question 13: Using the constraints map, do you have preferred locations for new artificial reefs focused on diving/snorkelling? Please enter up to three relevant grid references below.

Please note: Some quadrants that received votes are not available for artificial reefs - see grey shaded area in key.



Question 14: Do you support designing and implementing an artificial reef to support coastal protection and minimise erosion?'

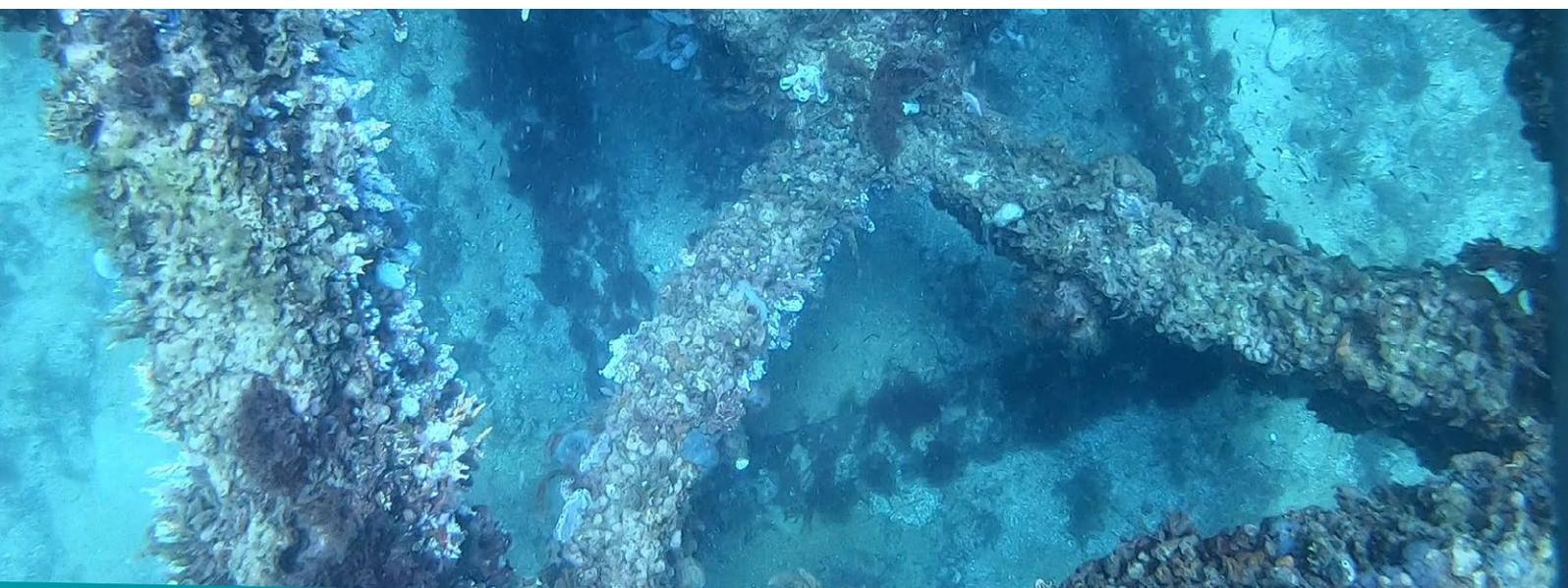


Question 15: Do you have any concerns about the installation of a new artificial reef in or around Cockburn Sound?

Theme	What you said
Pressure on existing facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Artificial reefs close to shore can result in high usage requiring car parking and associated visitor facilities.” • “Just needs to be managed well and if it is there to attract recreational fishing from the shore, rubbish bins must be provided for the plastic bait bags that otherwise get left on shore.” • “If it attracts more boaters, will there be an increase in facilities to support this, i.e. launching ramps and parking for trailer boats and jetties or on water refuelling for larger boats.”
Design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “If poorly designed, this can disrupt sediment flow, harm beach dynamics, or attract invasive species.” • “The location of artificial structures plays a critical role in ecosystem success. While there are many wrecks in Cockburn Sound, most do not support resident or spawning schools of Pink Snapper.” • “You need to ensure that you employ actual experts on the subject. Bring in marine scientists and trust them. It’s very easy to do more damage than good when building a reef, and if this goes wrong there is no coming back.” • “The replication of a single design used in multiple locations across the state misses the opportunity to truly support local species. Yes the structures do achieve their purpose, but applying design principles focused on local environment will greatly improve outcomes - think King Reef or Busselton Jetty, or even the Cockburn Sound erosion barrier - all great examples of locally focussed design for a purpose.”



Theme	What you said
<p>Clash of recreational uses</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “As I enjoy the area for snorkelling and swimming, I would be concerned that it would increase the presence of coastal fisherman that can interfere with my activities.” • “Potential for dangerous use such as spearfishing, particularly if close to shore. Have witnessed and heard reports of spearfishing occurring at C Y O’Connor beach artificial reef.” • “Only that they will be installed and then fishing will be banned on them.” • “There needs to be a controlled environment which reduces the clash between boater and divers, This is a common problem within the sound during the crabbing season.”
<p>Environmental concerns</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Only concern is it needs to happen ASAP so the reefs provide an established ecosystem prior to the commencement of the outer harbour construction.” • “As long as it is not made of materials that will further pollute our waters, I’m all for it.” • “The installation of an artificial reef for coastal protection should not be at the cost to the environment or marine processes. If natural process exist that support the ecosystem, human intervention should be very carefully considered.” • “Make sure (there are) no negative effects from changed sand movement. No destruction of existing weed beds.”
<p>Long term environmental impacts</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Please do not use waste tyres or plastics as they break down to microplastics and pollute the environment. Concrete blocks or rocks are preferable.” • “Artificial reefs would suffer just as much as the natural environment from ongoing siltation due to Tug operations berthing shipping etc” • “As long as it is not made of materials that will further pollute our waters, I’m all for it”
<p>Not supportive</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Concern that it’s just greenwashing inevitable dredging.” • “My concerns relate to members of the public damaging artificial reef habitats by trampling all over them. I would like the shires do more to prevent this and educate the public on preserving the marine habitat.” • “Just a distraction to appease the fishing community of the destruction of Westport, naval and other industrial developments will have on the sound, who are unlikely to be held properly accountable to their impacts.” • “Yes, if it is seen as a poor replacement for severely degraded habitat caused by the construction of the Port.”



Question 16: Do you have any additional comments or feedback?

Theme	What you said
<p>Consult experts and science</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Partner with innovate organisations already working in this space, aside from the obvious (WAMSI and UWA) - TNC and Minderoo Foundation” • “Incorporate ‘seahorse hotels’ as used in NSW. Work with researchers to understand benefits of artificial reef to a range of species (e.g. do they just attract animals, or do they increase their populations?)” • “Artificial reefs must be established well in advance of proposed works, with ongoing monitoring to ensure spawning stocks successfully transition to these sites. Their placement should be scientifically justified and strategically located, not simply chosen for public convenience.”
<p>Suggested design features</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Pipes for crays, octopus, crabs small fish etc” • “Caves for bigger fish and poles for Samson Fish, salmon, skippy etc to swim around” • “Could you consider repurposing some of the structure that will be removed when KBT1 is demolished, as this structure already hosts lots of marine habitat. It would be a shame to totally destroy it.” • “Other features beyond just artificial reefs should be considered, e.g. Sculptures, wrecks and/or jetties given the broad impact from Westport on recreational activities” • “Incorporating surface textures, reef tiles or pile wraps onto new port structures may be another way to restore ecosystem function at the structure-sea boundary post construction”
<p>Combat coastal erosion</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The use of artificial reefs to protect our coastlines needs to be expanded to protect our shorelines. We need to make use of every opportunity to determine what works best with the design of the artificial reefs to protect our environment for generations to come.” • “Use the reef to stop coastal erosion and support snorkelling and scuba. Help keep our beaches the best in the world, with great recreational variety.” • “If it brings different marine life and helps with coastal protection and erosion control then I’m in favour.” • “More studies (over several years) by experts in Oceanography are required before any final decision is made for the installation, as the artificial reefs may exacerbate the existing coastal erosion problems.”
<p>Separation of fishing and recreation</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Please don’t advertise as a fishing reef - fishers in the area take the mick at woodman point and rocko - they will somehow find a way to cause adverse issues for the reef (overfishing - littering etc) and rest of the community who want to enjoy it.” • “Very supportive, believe there should be some that are marine sanctuaries and no fishing, and others where it is allowed to support fish stocks growing and spilling into the rest of the area.” • “Preference is for there to be no fishing or spearfishing around artificial reefs close to shore.”



Theme	What you said
<p>Protect/ reestablish habitat and marine life</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Try to reestablish some of the habitat which has been lost over the past 100 years.” • “Cockburn Sound could become a valuable wildlife habitat again.” • “All decisions must be in the best interests of marine ecosystems and the protection of vulnerable animals from human interference” • “Make it a protected sanctuary. Develop further or extend the current Dive Trail at Rockingham. Have seen a wide range of marine species over the past decade there, has potential. Fairly healthy reef system between Point Peron and Garden Island. Install artificial reefs, starting with a trail closer from this point and gradually install more over time further into the sound.”
<p>Surfing</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Build an artificial reef off of Point Peron for surfers...” • “Use Albany surf reef at Middleton beach as a concept to provide artificial reefs north of Fremantle to expand the marine life habitat, coastal erosion protection and of course surfing opportunities in Perth metro area.” • “Reef for kitesurfing could be installed in C6 & C7 and G6 & G6”