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Australia's 2024–25 Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishing Season

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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Summary

The 2024–25 southern bluefin tuna (SBT) fishing season report summarises catches and fishing activities in the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery (SBTF) up to and including the 2024–25 fishing season[1] (1 December 2024 – 30 November 2025).

Australia's allocation as agreed by the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) was 7,295 t for the 2024–25 fishing season. However, this was adjusted to account for a set aside for the recreational sector and to account for undercatch in the previous fishing season, so the effective total allowable commercial catch was 8,010.5 t. A total of 45 commercial fishing vessels landed SBT in Australian waters in the 2024–25 fishing season for a total catch of 6,342 t. A total of 70.1% of the catch was taken by purse seine with the remainder taken by longline, pole-and-line, rod-and-reel and trolling. Five purse seiners fished off South Australia for the Australian farming operations during the 2024–25 fishing season, with live bait, pontoon-towing and feeding vessels also involved. The purse-seine fishing commenced in late December 2024 and finished in March 2025.

Length-frequency data from the purse-seine fishery indicate a shift to smaller fish in recent years. Average lengths of SBT transferred to farms in South Australia declined from 96.4 cm in the 2016–17 season to 82.6 cm in 2024–25.

In the 2024–25 fishing season, observers monitored 13.8% of purse-seine sets where fish were retained for the farm sector and 17.5% of the estimated SBT purse-seine catch. In 2025, the review rate for electronic monitoring (e-monitoring) footage of longline hook effort in the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) in the areas of the SBT migration was 8.8%. The review rate of longline hooks that actually caught SBT in the ETBF was 10.2%. In 2025, the review rate for e-monitoring footage of longline hook effort in the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery was 7.5%.

[1] Various time periods, such as 'calendar years', 'fishing seasons' and 'quota years', can be used when describing Australia's SBT Fishery. Unless otherwise indicated, we have used quota years in this report, but note that fishing seasons of the various fishery components often span quota years. The start and end dates of Australian quota years have varied and are presented in Appendix 1.

1 Introduction

This report summarises catches and fishing activities in the 2024–25 fishing season of the Australian Southern Bluefin Tuna (*Thunnus maccoyii*; SBT) Fishery. Caton et al. (1995) provides a more detailed historical description of the fishery.

1.1 History

Troll catches of SBT were reported as early as the 1920s off the east coast of Australia, but significant commercial fishing for SBT commenced in the early 1950s with the establishment of a pole-and-live-bait fishery off New South Wales (NSW), SA and, in 1970 Western Australia (WA). Purse seine gear overtook pole as the main fishing method and catches peaked at 21,500 t in 1982. The bulk of this early Australian catch of SBT was canned. Following quota reductions in 1983–84, the WA pole fishery for very small juveniles closed down and the south-eastern fishery began to target larger juveniles to supply the Japanese sashimi market. Surface catches were further reduced between 1989 and 1995 when about half of the Australian total allowable catch (TAC) was taken by Australia–Japan joint venture longliners in the Australian Fishing Zone (AFZ). The joint ventures ceased in late 1997. From 1992 to 1998, domestic longliners operating off Tasmania (TAS) and NSW also took around 5–10% of the total Australian catch.

In 1990–91, about 20 t of SBT were transferred to fattening cages in Port Lincoln, SA, to enhance their value. Utilisation of the Australian SBT TAC in 'farming' operations increased from 3% of the TAC in 1991–92 to 98% in 1999–2000. The purse-seine fishery now accounts for ~70% of the total catch.

Following declaration of the AFZ in 1979, Japanese longliners fished under a range of bilateral conditions, a real-time monitoring program and joint-venture arrangements until 1997 when Japanese longliners were excluded from all AFZ fishing operations following failure to reach agreement on a global TAC within the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT). Caton and Ward (1996) provides copies of annual subsidiary agreements for the operations of bilateral-licensed longliners in the AFZ from 1979–80 to 1994–95.

1.2 Recent seasons

The Australian commercial SBT catches for the 2024 and 2025 calendar years were 6,441 t and 6,516 t, respectively. The commercial catches for the 2023–24 and 2024–25 fishing seasons were 6,324 t and 6,342 t, respectively (Table 1). The Australian allocation from CCSBT for the 2024–25 fishing season was 7,295 t. Australia carried forward 1,080.26 t of undercatch to the 2024–25 fishing season. This action is consistent with the guidelines in the CCSBT Resolution on Limited Carry-forward of Unfished Annual Total Available Catch of Southern Bluefin Tuna adopted in October 2017. See Appendix A for quota year dates and Appendix B for duration of the farm sector fishing season. Australia sets aside 5% of its annual allocation for mortality associated with recreational fishing. For the 2024–25 fishing season this equates to 364.75 t available to recreational fishers, with the remaining amount available for commercial fishing.

Table 1 Australian Catch (t) by Gear and State for Fishing Seasons 1988–89 to 2024–25

Fishing	Western Australia				South Australia				New South Wales			Tasmania			Large Longliners			Australia Total				Total
Season	Albany Pole	Esperance Pole	Long-line	Total	Pole & Purse Seine	Farm Cages	Long-line	Total	Pole & Purse Seine	Long-line	Total	Troll	Long-line	Total	Aust. Charter	Joint-venture	Total	Domestic Surface	Domestic Long-line	Total Long-line	RTMP	All Gears
1988–89	204	221	0	425	4872	0	0	4872	0	1	1	2	0	2	0	684	684	5299	1	685	0	5984
1989–90	133	97	0	230	4199	0	0	4199	0	6	6	14	0	14	0	400	400	4443	6	406	0	4849
1990–91	175	45	0	220	2588	0	0	2588	0	15	15	57	0	57	255	881	1136	2865	15	1151	300[a]	4316
1991–92	17	0	0	17	1629	138	14	1781	34	90	124	36	20	56	59	2057	2116	1854	124	2240	800	4894
1992–93	0	0	0	0	716	722	68	1506	16	238	254	23	44	67	0	2735	2735	1477	350	3085	650	5212
1993–94	0	0	0	0	621	1294	55	1970	0	286	286	7	105	112	0	2299	2299	1922	446	2745	270	4937
1994–95	0	0	0	0	908	1954	2	2864	0	157	157	4	109	113	0	1295	1295	2866	268	1563	650	5080
1995–96	0	0	0	0	1447	3362	0	4809	28	89	117	0	262	262	0	0	0	4837	351	351	0	5188
1996–97	0	0	0	0	2000	2498	0	4497	7	229	236	2	242	244	0	0	0	4507	472	472	0	4978
1997–98	0	0	0[b]	0	916	3488	0[b]	4403	0[c]	475	475	0[d]	219	219	0	0	0	4433	664	664	0	5097
1998–99	0	0	0[b]	0	28	4991	0[b]	5018	0[c]	97	97	0[d]	116	116	0	0	0	5016	216	216	0	5232
1999–00	0	0	0[b]	0	0	5130	13	5143	0	114	114	0	0[d]	0	0	0	0	5130	127	127	0	5257
2000–01	0	0	0[b]	0	0	5162	6	5168	0	32	32	0	0[d]	0	0	0	0	5162	38	38	0	5247
2001–02	0	0	7	7	0	5234	0	5234	0	22[e]	22	0	0[d]	0	0	0	0	5234	29	29	0	5262
2002–03	0	0	0[f]	0	0	5375	0	5375	0	17	17	0	0	0	0	0	0	5375	17	17	0	5391
2003–04	0	0	0[f]	0	0[h]	4874	0[g]	4874	0	226[e]	226	0	20	20	0	0	0	4874	247	247	0	5120
2004–05	0	0	0	0	0	5214	0	5214	0	35	35	0	0	0	0	0	0	5214	35	35	0	5248
2005–06	0	0	0	0	0	5302	0	5302	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	5302	6	6	0	5308
2006–07	0	0	0	0	0	5230	0	5230	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	5230	4	4	0	5234
2007–08	0	0	0	0	0	5211	0	5211	0	23	23	0	0	0	0	0	0	5211	23	23	0	5234
2008–09	0	0	0	0	2	5015	0	5017	11	213	225	0	<1	<1	0	0	0	5029	213	213	0	5242
2009–10[i]	0	0	0	0	0	3931	0	3931	0	161	161	0	0	0	0	0	0	3931	161	161	0	4091
2010–11[j]	0	0	0	0	0	3872	0	3872	0	85	85	1	0	1	0	0	0	3872	85	85	0	3958
2011–12	0	0	0	0	0	4485	0	4485	0	58	58	0	0	0	0	0	0	4485	58	58	0	4543
2012–13	0	0	<1	0	0	4198	0	4198	0	341	341	0	0	0	0	0	0	4198	341	341	0	4539
2013–14	0	0	0	0	0	5039[k]	11	5050	0	369	369	0	0	0	0	0	0	5039	380	380	0	5420
2014–15	0	0	0	0	0	4948[l]	0	4948	0	572[m]	572	0	0	0	0	0	0	4948	571	571	0	5519
2015–16	0	0	0	0	0	4899[n]	0	4899	0	554	554	0	180[o]	180	0	0	0	4899	734	734	0	5633
2016–17	0	0	0	0	0	4683	0	4683	0	566[p]	566	0	84[q]	84	0	0	0	4683	650	650	0	5334
2017–18	0	0	0	0	0	5130[r]	0	5130	0	1029[s]	1029	0	0	0	0	0	0	5130	1029	1029	0	6159
2018–19	0	0	0	0	0	5294[t]	0	5294	0	761	761	0	20[u]	20	0	0	0	5308	766	766	0	6074
2019–20	0	0	0	0	0	4570[v]	0	4570	0	833	833	0	26[w]	26	0	0	0	4586	844	844	0	5429

Table 1 Australian Catch (t) by Gear and State for Fishing Seasons 1988–89 to 2024–25, Cont.

Fishing	Western Australia				South Australia				New South Wales			Tasmania			Large Longliners			Australia Total				Total
Season	Albany Pole	Esperance Pole	Long-line	Total	Pole & Purse Seine	Farm Cages	Long-line	Total	Pole & Purse Seine	Long-line	Total	Troll	Long-line	Total	Aust. Charter	Joint-venture	Total	Domestic Surface	Domestic Long-line	Total Long-line	RTMP	All Gears
2020–21	0	0	0	0	0	4593[x]	0	4594	0	1023	1023	0	31[y]	31	0	0	0	4606	1041	1041	0	5647[z]
2021–22	0	0	0	0	0	4944[A]	0	4944	0	988[B]	988	0	38[C]	38	0	0	0	4942	1013[D]	1013	0	5970[D]
2022–23	0	0	0	0	0	4699[E]	0	4699	0	1314	1314	0	22[F]	22	0	0	0	4712	1323	1323	0	6035
2023–24	0	0	0	0	0	4526[G]	0	4526	0	1167[H]	1167	0	631[I]	0	0	0	0	4526	1798	1798	0	6324
2024–25	0	0	0	0	11[J]	4447	0	4458	0	1229	1229	0	655[K]	655	0	0	0	4447	1895	1895	0	6342

Note that 'RTMP' refers to the Real Time Monitoring Program.

a Note that a further 700 t of Australian quota was 'frozen' (not allocated) in 1990–91.
b 1997–98 and 1998–99 Western Australia and South Australia non-farm catches are included in South Australia pole and purse seine catch, and in 1999–00 and 2000–01 Western Australia longline catch is included in South Australia longline due to confidentiality guidelines.
c 1997–98 to 1998–99 New South Wales pole and purse seine catches are included in New South Wales longline catch due to confidentiality guidelines.
d 1997–98 and 1998–99 Tasmania troll catches are included in Tasmania longline, and in 1999–00, 2000–01 and 2001–02 Tasmania longline catch is included in New South Wales longline due to confidentiality guidelines.
e 2001–02 and 2003–04 New South Wales longline catch also includes Queensland longline catch due to confidentiality guidelines.
f 2002–03 and 2003–04 Western Australia longline catch is included in New South Wales longline due to confidentiality guidelines.
g 2003–04 South Australia longline catch is included in New South Wales longline due to confidentiality guidelines.
h 2003–04 additional South Australia purse seine catch that did not go into farm cages is included in South Australia farm cages catch due to confidentiality guidelines.
i Year 1 of the 2009–11 fishing season (2009–10).
j Year 2 of the 2009–11 fishing season (2010–11).
k Includes <1t of trolling.
l Includes <1t of pole-and-line.
m Includes <5t of rod-and-reel around New South Wales and rod-and-reel and longline around Tasmania, due to confidentiality constraints.
n Includes <5t of pole-and-line and rod-and-reel, due to confidentiality constraints.
o Includes <1t of trolling, due to confidentiality constraints.
p Includes <1t of trolling, due to confidentiality constraints.
q Includes <1t of trolling, rod-and-reeling and gillnetting, due to confidentiality constraints.
r Includes pole-and-line, due to confidentiality constraints.
s Includes longlining and rod-and-reeling off Tasmania, due to confidentiality constraints.
t Includes pole-and-line, due to confidentiality constraints.
u Includes trolling and rod-and-reeling, due to confidentiality constraints.
v Includes pole-and-line, due to confidentiality constraints.
w Includes trolling and rod-and-reeling, due to confidentiality constraints.
x Includes pole-and-line, due to confidentiality constraints.

y Includes trolling off Western Australia and Tasmania, and rod-and-reeling off Tasmania, due to confidentiality constraints.
z Total catch reported in this table is 2t larger than the actual total catch for the 2020-21 season. This is due to 2t of SBT being caught in November 2021 but landed in December 2021. To assign the location of catch, logbook latitude and longitude values are required, which are assigned to seasons based on the date caught. This resulted in the discrepancy from the total catch as reported by landing data.
A Includes pole-and-line and trolling off South Australia and some trolling off Western Australia, due to confidentiality constraints.
B Includes longline in Queensland, due to confidentiality constraints.
C Includes trolling and rod-and-reeling off Tasmania and some rod-and-reeling off Victoria, due to confidentiality constraints.
D Total catch reported in this table is 2t lower than the actual total catch for the 2021-22 season. This is due to 2t of SBT being caught in November 2021 but landed in December 2021. To assign the location of catch, logbook latitude and longitude values are required, which are assigned to seasons based on the date caught. This resulted in the discrepancy from the total catch as reported by landing data.
E Includes pole-and-line off South Australia and trolling off Western Australia, due to confidentiality constraints.
F Includes rod-and-reel and trolling off Tasmania and Victoria; and longline off Victoria, due to confidentiality constraints.
G Includes handlining, pole-and-lining and rod-and-reeling off South Australia; and trolling and longlining off Western Australia, due to confidentiality constraints.
H Includes longlining off Queensland, due to confidentiality constraints.
I Includes rod-and-reel off Victoria and Tasmania and longlining off Victoria due to confidentiality constraints.
J Includes rod-and-reel off South Australia and Victoria, and longline and trolling off Western Australia.
K Includes longlining off South Australia and Victoria, and rod-and-reel and trolling off Tasmania.

2 Catch and effort

2.1 Purse seine fishery

In 2024–25, 70.1% of the Australian catch of SBT was taken by purse seine off SA for farm operations. The remainder was taken by longline off NSW, SA, TAS, VIC and WA; pole-and-line off SA; trolling off TAS and WA; and, rod-and-reel off SA, TAS and VIC. Australian catch by gear and state from the 1988–89 to the 2024–25 fishing season is shown in Table 1. Catch by fishing season with number of vessels and vessel search hours are shown in Appendix C. The Australian catch of SBT for the calendar years 2023, 2024 and 2025 is mapped in Figure 1, 2 and 3, respectively.

2.1.1 Nominal CPUE

Nominal catch-per-unit-effort (CPUE) indices for the Australian surface and longline fisheries are not viewed as indicative of stock status. The farm operations use purse seines to catch SBT, with assistance from bait vessels and spotter planes. Australia does not consider these data suitable for interpreting catch rates as an index of abundance.

2.1.2 Size composition

In the SA purse-seine fishery, there has been reduced competition for SBT among fishers following the introduction of individual transferable quotas (ITQs). Starting in the late 1980s, the fishery targeted small (~80 cm) SBT, which were previously taken in bulk for canning (Caton et al. 1995). However, the size range of SBT taken has been variable since then. Closure of Australian canneries resulted in an increase in the average length of SBT landed for fresh-chilled export. As the farming component of the fishery increased in the 1990s, the average length of SBT landed in SA decreased from a peak of 103.2 cm in 1995 to 80.4 cm in the 2022–23 fishing season (Table 2). The decrease is primarily due to a reduction in the size of SBT available to purse-seine fishing in key fishing grounds in the Great Australian Bight. The average length of SBT landed in SA in 2024–25 was 82.6 cm. Length frequency raised to the total catch is shown in Figure 4, 5, 7 and 8.

2.2 Longline fishery

The catch of SBT by the Australian longline fleet off the east coast has grown in recent years from 58 t in 2011–12 to 1,895 t in 2024–25. In 2024–25, approximately 95% of the Australian longline caught SBT were landed or processed in six main locations: Lakes Entrance, Ulladulla, Bermagui, Eden, Hobart and Portland. Other common landing or processing ports in recent seasons are Tuncurry, Nelson Bay and Coffs Harbour. Current in port sampling programs are mainly targeted at tropical tunas, however SBT length frequency data are also collected from the major ports (n=3,668 in 2024–25).

As the catch has increased questions have been raised about whether there is value in collecting otoliths for estimation of the age composition of the catch of this fishery (for use in the SBT operating models), and if so, how many otoliths are required and how will length-at-age data be used to estimate catch-at-age with required level of precision. The size range of SBT caught in the longline fishery (~110–180 cm fork length) is larger than those caught by the surface fishery (~80–110 cm) so length-at-age data currently collected by Australia cannot be applied to the longline fishery.

Australia engaged CSIRO in 2017 to evaluate the direct ageing requirements for the Australian longline fishery. The research concluded that based on the size range of SBT caught by the longline fishery a minimum sample size of 300 otoliths (~20 fish per 5-cm length class) for direct ageing per fishing season would be sufficient. It was noted that flexibility in the sampling program is important if the size range of SBT in the catch changes over time. The aim of the sampling program would be to provide a representative estimate of length at age by collecting otoliths from the full range of sizes caught while maintaining sufficient numbers of otoliths in each size class to achieve the target level of precision. The number of otoliths required to meet ageing requirements for fish caught in the longline fishery may need to be re-visited in parallel with, and in light of, recent epigenetic ageing analysis of SBT that has shown this method produces reliable age estimates for SBT in other age classes.

2.2.1 Nominal CPUE

Nominal SBT CPUE for Australian longline effort and 4+ catch was provided in the 2025 data exchange and is shown at Appendix D and Appendix E.

2.2.2 Size composition

Since the late 1980s, the average length of SBT landed in NSW has varied considerably because of the varying contribution of longline and sporadic surface catches to the overall catch levels. However, longline-caught SBT off NSW have, in general, been considerably larger than SBT previously taken in this fishery by purse seine in SA (Figure 6 and 7). Similarly, the size trends in the Tasmanian area of the fishery reflect the change from trolling to longlining operations, which target larger fish, in 1993.

The percentage representation by length in the winter catches of Japanese longliners off eastern TAS from 1988 to 1997 show modal changes through time (Figure 6). Modes that represent juvenile age classes were less visually evident in 1988 and 1989. Sample sizes were < 1000 in these years which may contribute to the lack of modal clarity. Modes at approximately 90 cm, 104 cm and 118 cm were visually evident in the period between 1991 and 1997. Progression of these modes into size classes >130 cm was also visually evident over this period. The absence of clear modes in the size range of 130 cm to 150 cm in the period 1988 to 1993 is consistent with intensive removals of small SBT in the early 1980s by Australia's surface fishery.

A reduced representation of SBT <105 cm was visually evident in 1994, then of SBT <120 cm in 1995, and SBT <135 cm in 1996. This coincided with a reduced abundance of small SBT (<100 cm) in the TAS troll fishery in 1994 and 1995, and the failure of the troll fishery in 1996 and 1997. The Japanese and joint-venture longline operations in the AFZ ceased operations in 1997.

Figure 1 Australian SBT catch in the 2023 calendar year. Note that catch is centred in each grid square.

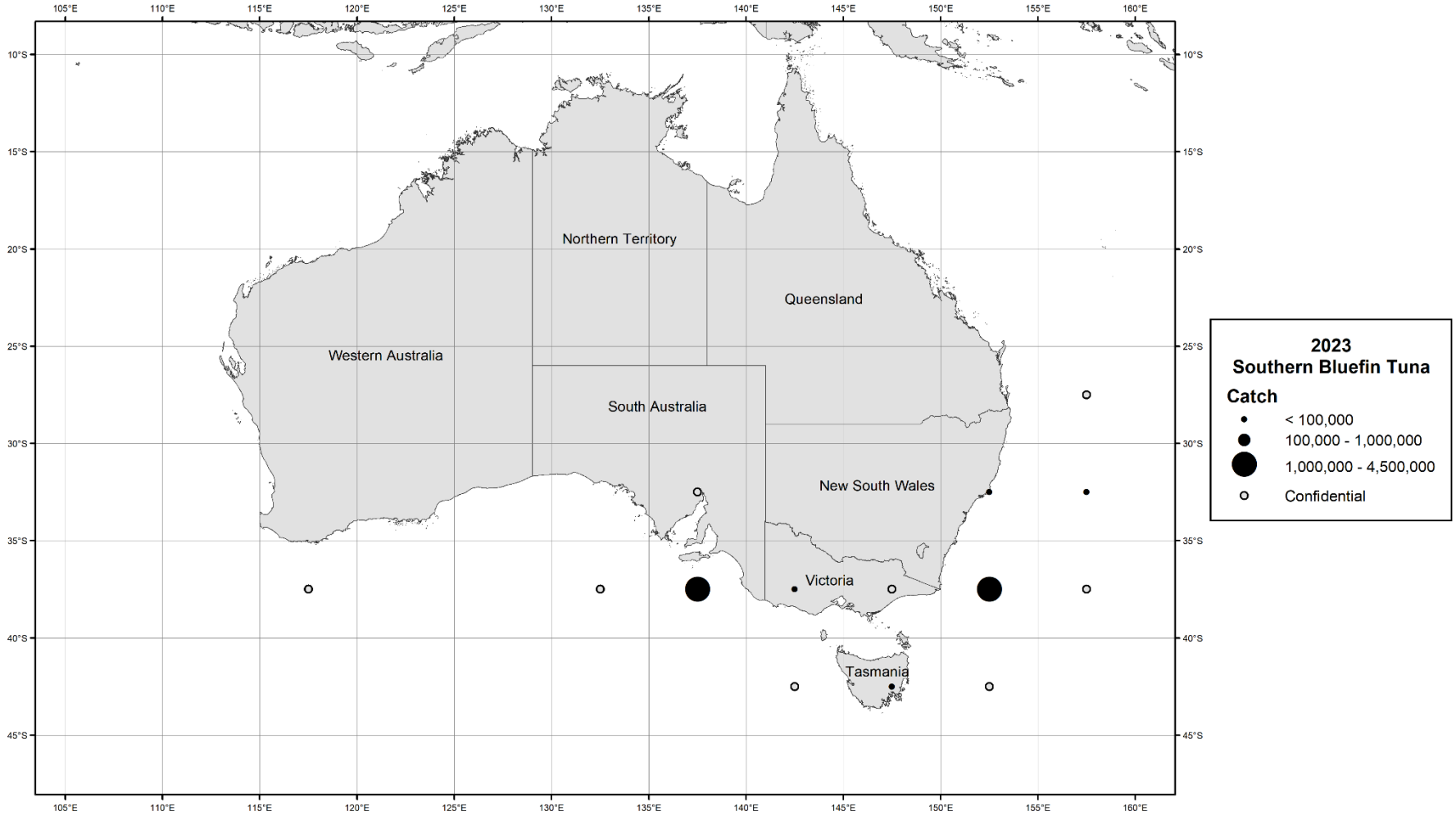


Figure 2 Australian SBT catch in the 2024 calendar year. Note that catch is centred in each grid square.

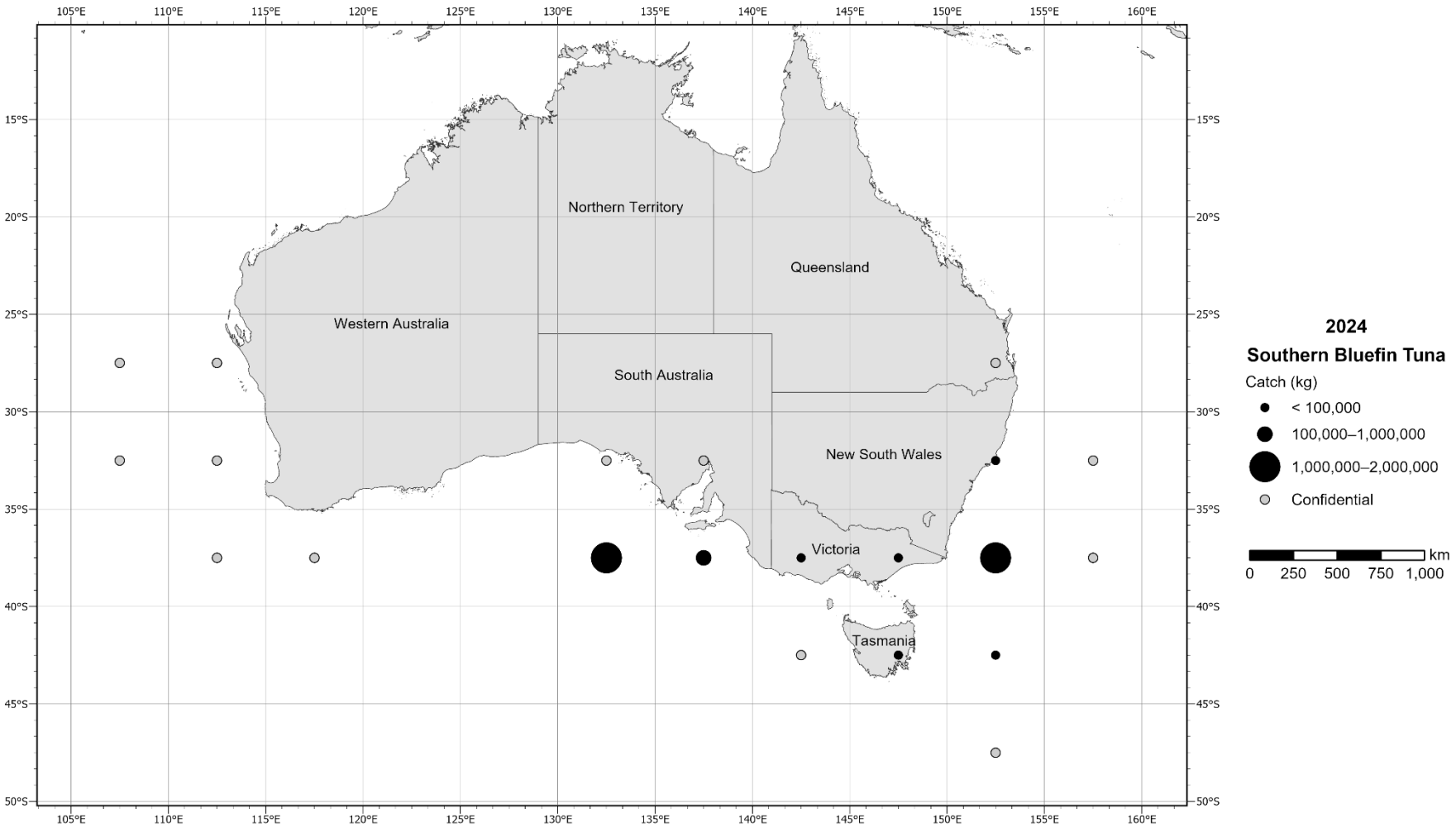


Figure 3 Australian SBT catch in the 2025 calendar year. Note that catch is centred in each grid square.

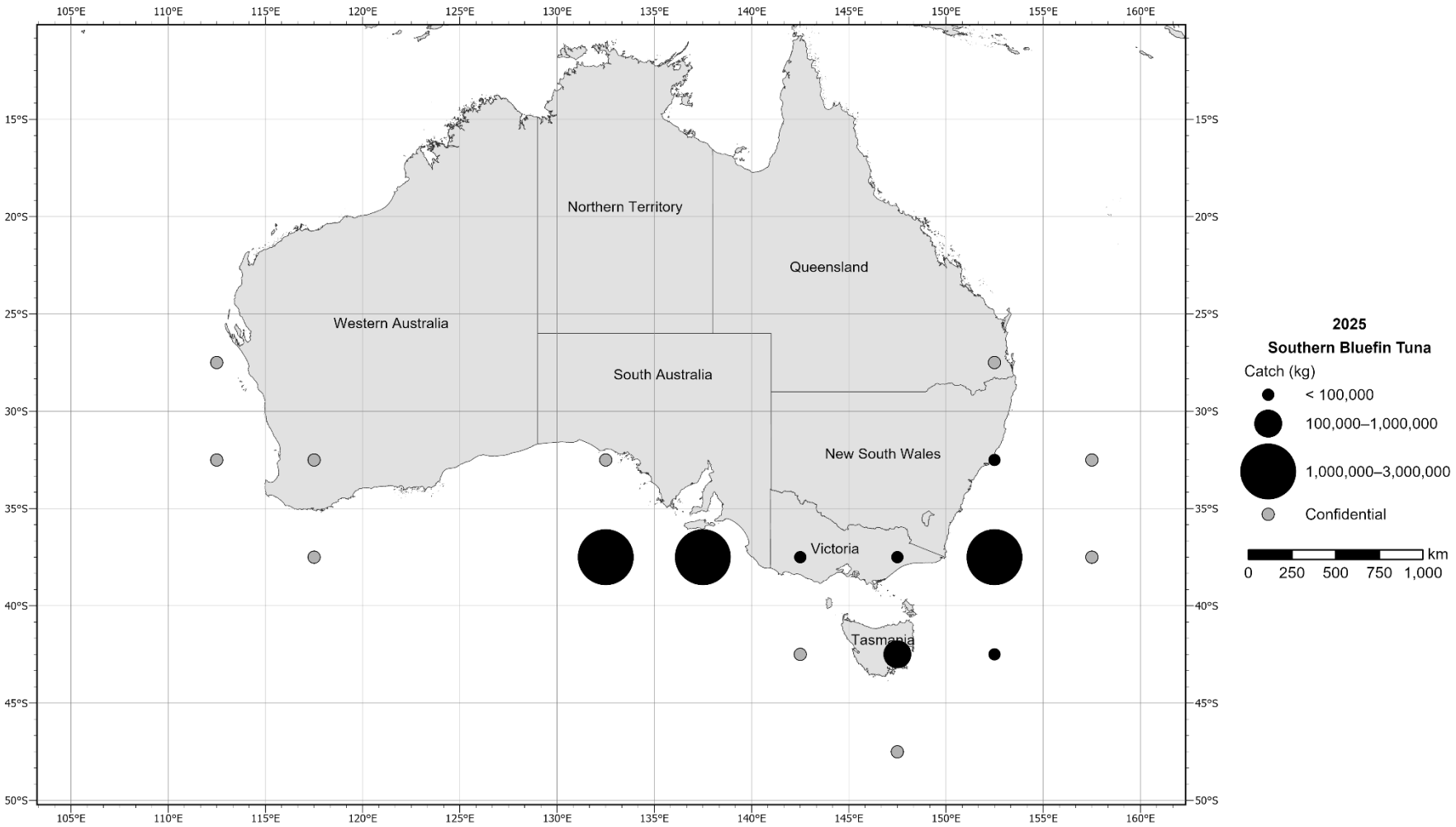
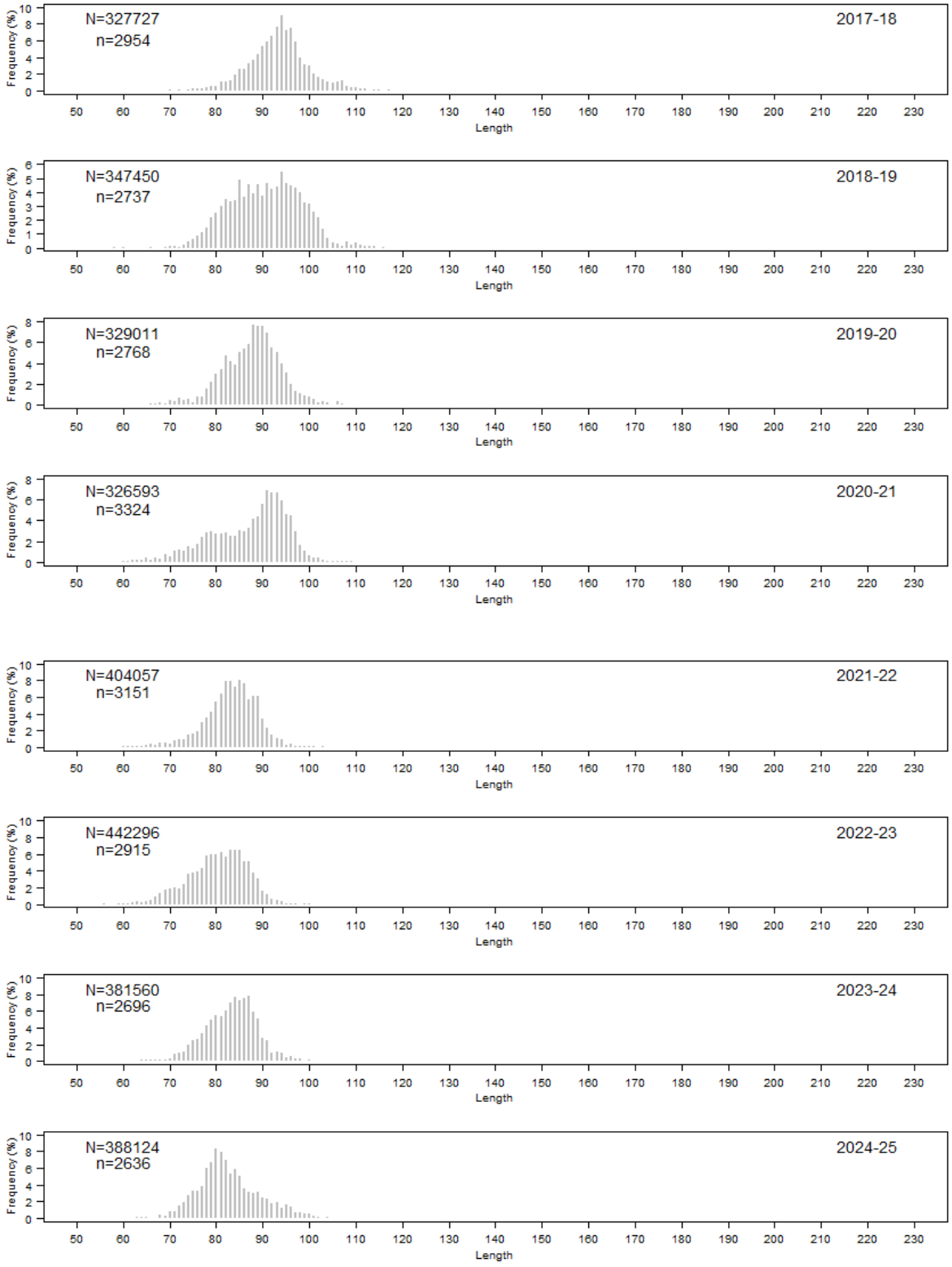


Table 2 Average fork length (cm) of SBT landed in each Australian state, 1989 to 2025

Calendar Year	Western Australia[a]	South Australia[a]	Tasmania	NSW	Joint-venture
1989	65.4	88.8	–	–	–
1990	65.6	89.3	96.0	112.8	–
1991	67.2	95.5	94.9	154.8	114.5
1992	66.1	97.0	93.4	109.2	108.0
1993	65.2	101.1	99.7	117.8	116.5
1994	–	97.4	125.5	121.3	124.8
1995	–	103.2	127.9	125.0	125.0
1996	–	102.7	132.7	139.7	–
1997	–	97.7	133.2	134.6	–
1998	–	94.9	134.5	136.1	–
1999	–	97.6	134.2	138.5	–
2000	–	97.0	–	154.3	–
2001	154.3	98.1	–	149.7	–
2002	–	98.4	–	159.9	–
2003	–	98.7	–	154.1	–
2004	–	93.6	–	161.9	–
2005	–	91.0	–	161.7	–
2006	–	90.7	–	154.1	–
2007	–	94.0	–	150.5	–
2008	–	93.9	–	166.7	–
2009	–	97.3	159.9	149.6	–
2010	–	94.4	–	146.7	–
2011	–	89.1	147.5	149.1	–
2012	–	93.0	–	167.0	–
2013	–	96.1	–	146.6	–
2014	–	94.7	–	155.2	–
2015	–	92.5	–	140.3	–
2016	–	96.4	–	142.9	–
2017	–	93.4	134.1	140.4	–
2018	–	90.6	133.5	139.5	–
2019	–	87.8	129.6	140.7	–
2020	–	87.2	132.5	141.4	–
2021	–	83.3	123.1	136.3	–
2022	–	80.4	133.0	140.1	–
2023	–	83.3	124.9	136.1	–
2024	–	82.6	125.7	136.7	–
2025	–	–	133	135.3	–

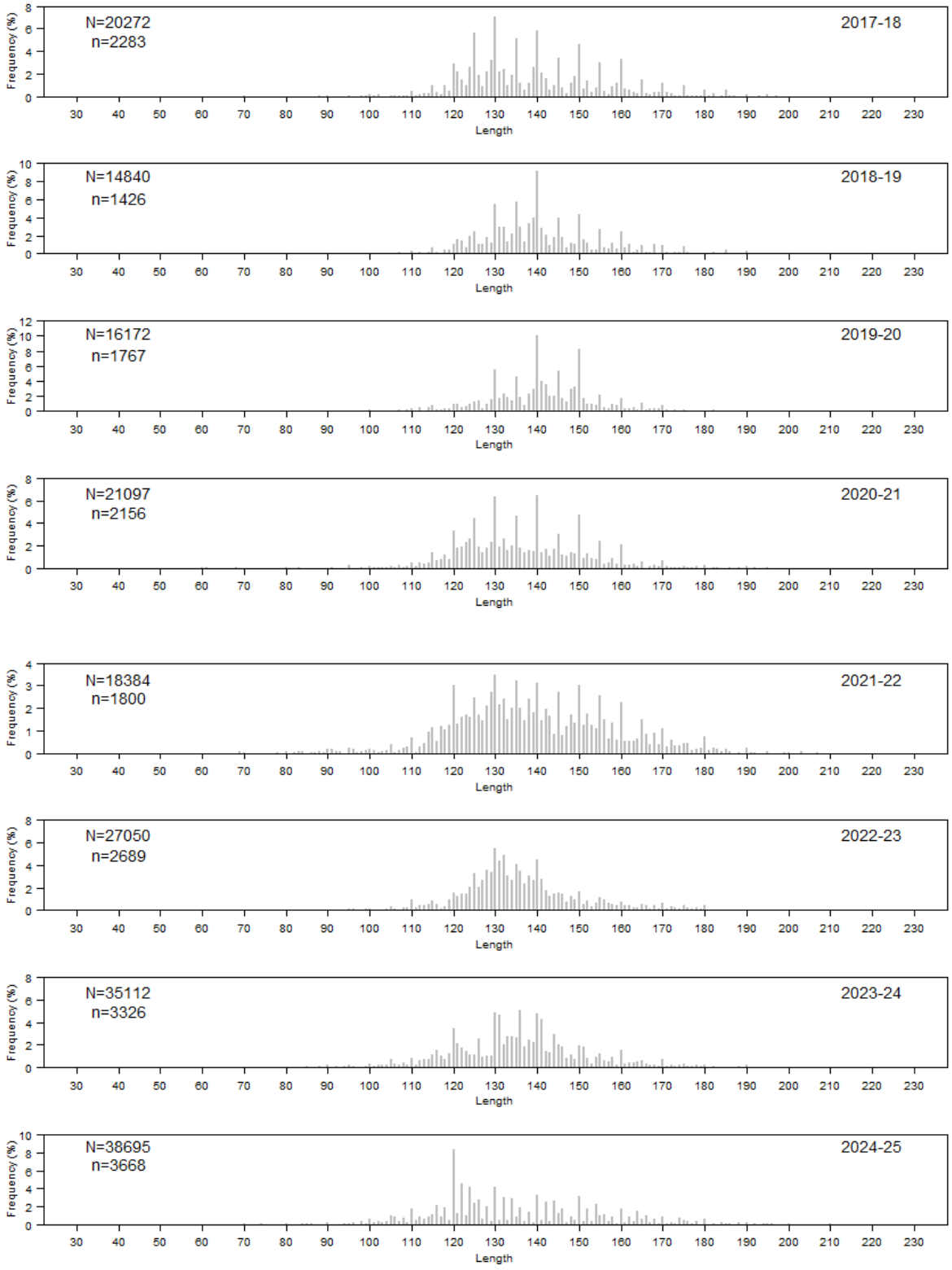
a Lengths are reported by calendar year, except for Western Australia, which are by financial year (e.g. 1998 represents the financial year 1998–99) and South Australia, which are by fishing season, to cover the summer season

Figure 4 Length frequency of SBT purse seine catch in Australian waters raised to total catch, 2017–18 to 2024–25 fishing seasons



Source: tow cage size monitoring database

Figure 5 Length frequency histograms for retained SBT longline catch in Australian waters raised to total catch, 2017–18 to 2024–25 quota years



Source: AFMA observer data and processor monitoring data

Figure 6 Length frequency of SBT measured by Australian observers on Japanese longliners fishing in the Tasmania region, 1988 to 1997. The data include small SBT tagged and released by observers.

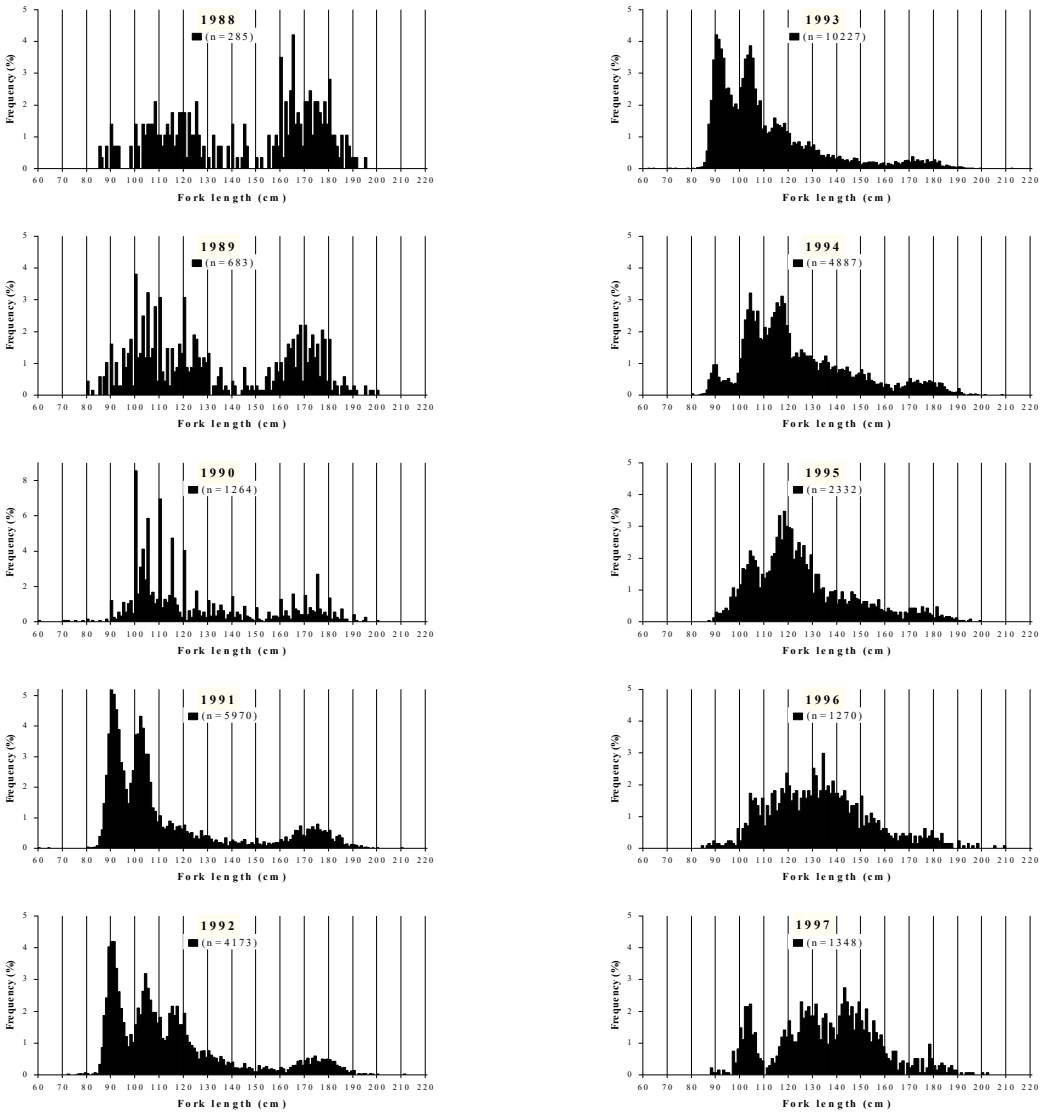
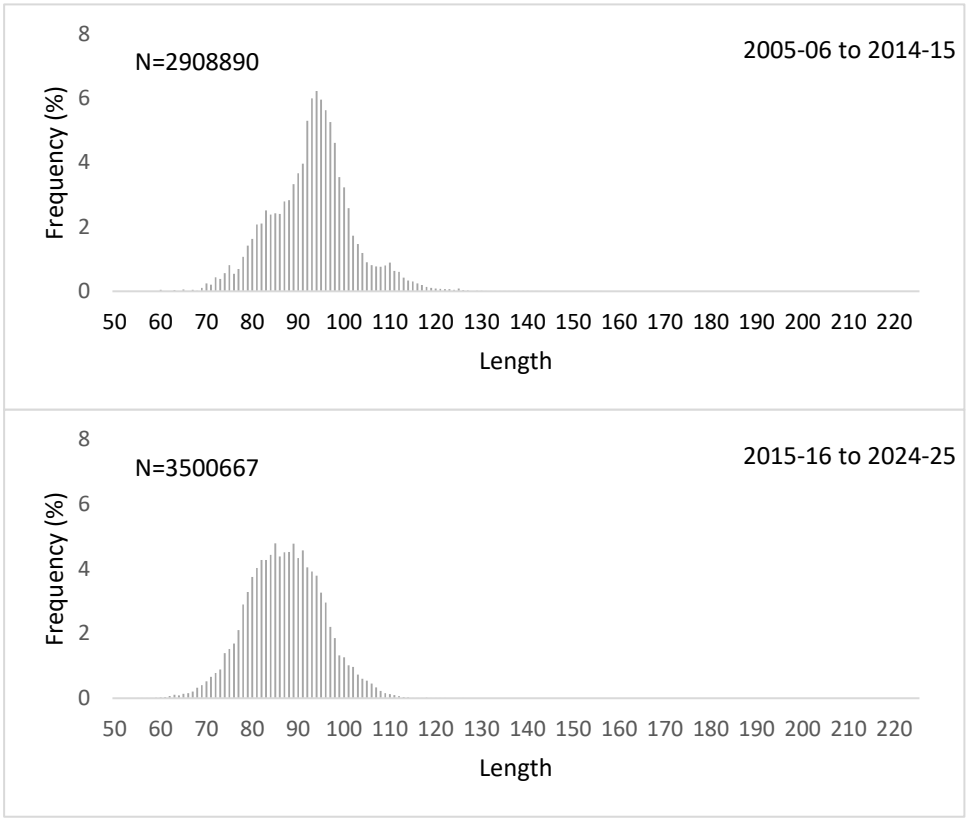
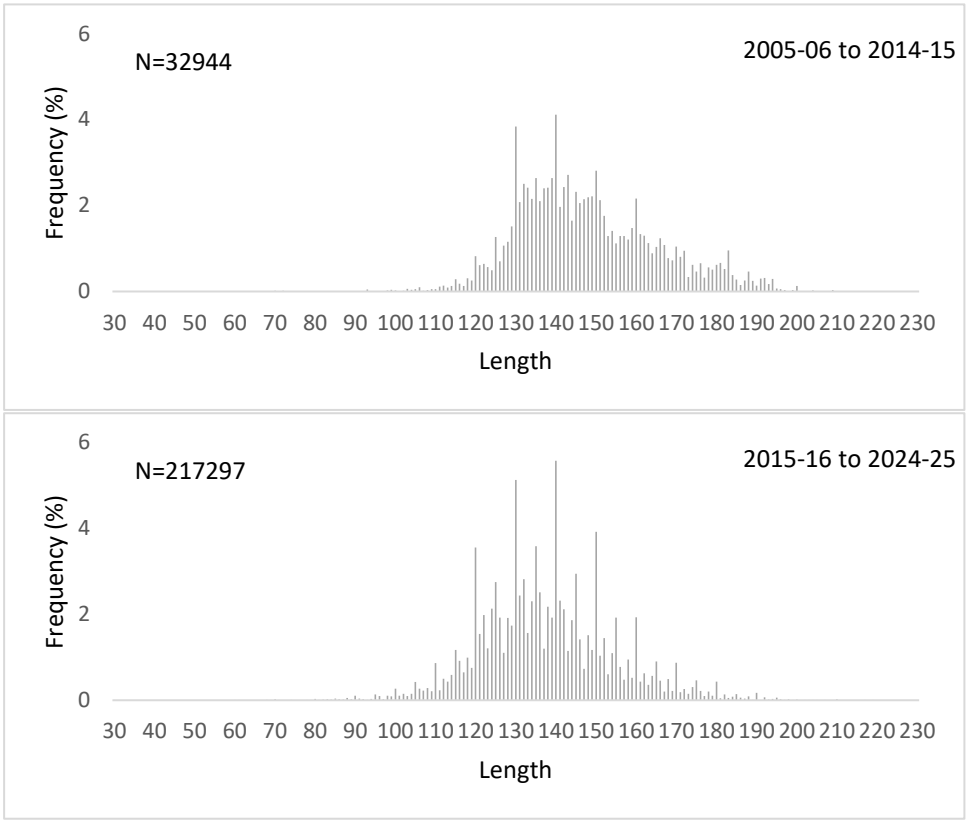


Figure 7 Length frequency histograms for retained SBT purse seine catch in Australian waters raised to total catch by decade, quota years



Source: AFMA observer data and processor monitoring data

Figure 8 Length frequency histograms for retained SBT longline catch in Australian waters raised to total catch by decade, quota years



Source: AFMA observer data and processor monitoring data

3 Fleet size and distribution

In 2024–25, a total of 45 commercial fishing vessels landed SBT (or transferred to farm cages) in Australian waters.

3.1 South Australia (SA)

The one- to five-year-old SBT, which school from late spring to autumn in surface waters of the eastern Great Australian Bight, SA, were fished by 5 purse seiners during 2024–25, with various live bait, pontoon-towing and feeding vessels also involved. Purse-seine fishing commenced in late-December 2024 and finished by the end of March 2025. One vessel conducted pole-and-line operations and two vessels conducted rod-and-reel operations in the waters off SA in the 2024-25 season. Three vessels also conducted longlining operations in the waters off SA, all of which also fished in NSW, TAS or VIC waters.

3.2 Western Australia (WA)

Three trolling vessels and one longline vessel caught SBT off WA in 2024–25.

3.3 New South Wales (NSW)

In 2024–25, 26 longliners reported landing SBT in deeper waters off NSW. Nineteen of these vessels also fished waters around SA, TAS or VIC.

3.4 Tasmania (TAS)

In 2024–25, 12 longliners caught SBT off TAS. Nine of these vessels also operated in waters off NSW, VIC or SA. Two vessels conducted rod-and-reel operations and one vessel conducted trolling operations that caught SBT off TAS.

3.5 Queensland (QLD)

No vessels caught SBT off QLD in 2024–25.

3.6 Victoria (VIC)

Nineteen longline vessels caught SBT off Victoria, all of which also operated off NSW, SA or TAS. One vessel conducted rod-and-reel operations catching SBT off Victoria.

4 Research and monitoring to improve estimates of attributable catch

4.1 Recreational fishing

Recreational fishing for SBT occurs primarily off south-east TAS, NSW, SA, and western VIC. There is also some catch of small SBT off south-west WA. Recreational fishing for SBT is managed by the relevant states. States that have a recreational fishing bag limit (number of fish that can be retained) for SBT include SA, VIC, TAS and NSW. SA also has a limit on the number of SBT taken per boat. Retention of SBT by recreational fishers is banned in QLD.

Tracey et al. (2016) details a study examining post-release survival and physiological stress in SBT captured recreationally. This study estimated a post-release survival rate of 86.6% and indicates that SBT captured recreationally are likely to survive when released. However, this result is a best-case scenario for recreational fishing using proper handling methods and it is unclear how these results relate to commercial longline post-survival rates.

4.1.1 National estimate of recreational SBT catch

A national survey of recreational fishing for SBT that commenced in 2018 was finalised in 2020 (Tracey et al. 2020). The survey estimated recreational catch was 270 t for the survey year. Australia advised the CCSBT in 2020 that it would set aside 5% of its CCSBT allocation annually against recreational catch, starting in the 2020–21 season, which at the time was around 312 t. The additional amount set aside allows for fluctuation between years in the recreational fishery, plus some room for growth in recreational catch.

4.1.2 Variation in recreational catch

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the recreational catch of SBT can vary between years and regions. The mechanisms driving this variability are not well understood but likely include factors such as variation in the currents and oceanographic conditions. These environmental factors also likely affect the size of the fish that are available, as variation in the size of the SBT taken by recreational fishers has been documented both within and between years (e.g. Forbes et al. 2009; Tracey et al. 2013).

Fisher behaviour also varies between regions and seasons and is likely to influence the level of fishing for SBT. In years where the fish are further offshore there is likely to be less effort to fish. In contrast, when the fish occur close to shore, they may be available to a wider group of fishers. Fishers may also be motivated to fish (or not to fish) based on other factors such as the size of the fish being taken and the perceived abundance of fish in that year.

4.1.3 Tag releases

The number of reported SBT tag releases by Australian recreational fishers is provided in Table 3. These data do not include recreational tag releases using CCSBT tags. There has been an increase in reported tag and release activity for SBT since 2005, particularly in SA. The trends in SBT tag-releases are difficult to interpret; tagging is influenced by various factors, including the abundance and distribution of SBT, angler participation rates (fishing effort), angler attitudes and behaviour, the condition of fish, the availability of tags and management measures (e.g. bag limits) in relation to fish size and catch rates.

Table 3 Reported tag releases of SBT by Australian recreational fishers, 1990 to 2025

Year	Percentage of total releases					No. of Releases
	TAS	NSW	SA	VIC	WA	
1990	7.1	0.0	14.3	57.1	21.4	14
1991	5.8	44.7	23.2	25.6	0.7	293
1992	5.6	18.5	48.1	24.1	3.7	54
1993	3.5	6.9	87.9	0.0	1.7	231
1994	0.0	14.3	76.2	0.0	9.5	63
1995	0.0	25.0	25.0	0.0	50.0	12
1996	0.0	25.8	74.2	0.0	0.0	159
1997	0.0	3.7	87.0	0.0	9.3	54
1998	4.8	0.8	52.5	40.6	1.3	377
1999	0.0	0.0	70.9	29.1	0.0	117
2000	0.0	0.4	99.1	0.4	0.0	224
2001	38.8	1.9	23.8	30.6	5.0	160
2002	39.4	2.6	25.9	25.4	6.7	193
2003	14.3	0.0	71.4	0.0	14.3	21
2004	31.8	0.0	45.5	0.0	22.7	22
2005	0.0	2.1	93.7	0.0	4.2	96
2006	7.2	0.2	84.7	0	7.9	584
2007	29.3	0.1	66.2	1.3	3.1	1,303
2008	1.0	0	96.6	0.5	1.9	1,006
2009	9.0	3.3	83.9	1.7	2.2	2,044
2010	5.2	0.5	85.0	4.6	4.6	3,501
2011	4.3	15.9	75.7	3.5	0.6	3,351
2012	36.5	5.4	40.6	14.3	3.3	1,042
2013	12.8	0.3	80.0	6.6	0.3	986
2014	22.9	3.0	59.5	14.1	0.5	2,288
2015	16.4	1.0	72.3	9.7	0.6	2,106
2016	35.8	0.6	55.3	8.1	0.2	2,842
2017	29.3	2.2	58.9	8.9	0.8	1,179
2018	18.5	2.8	56.9	21.0	0.7	1,402
2019	28.9	0.5	46.2	23.2	1.2	1,095
2020	42.1	0.3	32.8	24.2	0.7	1,174
2021	35.8	6.3	51.3	6.3	0.3	1,519
2022	32.6	0	55.9	11.4	0.1	2,142
2023	42.6	1.7	37.4	18.2	0.1	1,434
2024	36.9	0.7	42.4	19.9	0.1	682
2025	56.9	1.4	30.5	5.6	0.3	640[a]

Source: NSW DPI Game Fish Tagging Program

a 34 tag releases in 2025 had unrecorded localities. The percentages per state are therefore based off the 606 fish with tag release location recorded.

4.2 Discards in the commercial fishery

4.2.1 Describe the various sources of information and data used in calculating the estimates

Purse-seine sector

Discarding of fish other than live release (immediately after encirclement or as a live release from tow cage) is not permitted in the purse-seine sector. All dead fish encountered during purse-seine operations, towing or transfers must be recorded in logbooks and accounted for under the quota system. To validate logbooks, observers and at-sea inspections are used. In the 2024–25 fishing season, observers monitored 13.8% of purse-seine sets where fish were retained for the farm sector and 17.5% of the estimated SBT catch. Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA)

representatives in Port Lincoln monitored 100% of all transfers. During 2024–25, no discarding of SBT was reported in logbooks collected in the purse-seine fishery in the Great Australian Bight.

Longline sector

The waters off the south-eastern coast of Australia are becoming an increasingly significant area of interaction between the SBT and longlining operations conducted by the Eastern Tuna and Billfish Fishery (ETBF) and SBTF as the increase in SBT quota available to Australia has been taken up by the sector. While the ETBF is a multi-species fishery, the SBTF is a single species fishery that requires operators to hold SBT quota that is nominated to their boat in order to take the species.

AFMA implements minimum quota holding requirements in specific areas of the ETBF where there is an increase probability of catching SBT. This approach minimises the risk of SBT being landed without quota being available and, in combination with restrictions on discarding, minimises unnecessary discards of SBT. ETBF vessels are also required to have a fully operational electronic monitoring system installed to operate.

The *Southern Bluefin Tuna Fishery Management Plan 1995* outlines the rules relating to the fishery. Statutory fishing rights issued under the Plan include conditions relevant to the discarding of SBT in the longline sector. These conditions are also included on statutory fishing rights issued for vessels in the ETBF.

The conditions for retaining and discarding SBT in the longline sector are outlined below.

When fishing in the SBT Zone using the longline method the holder must:

a) on first entry (which includes being present or fishing in) to the SBT Zone hold at least 1 uncaught Southern Bluefin Tuna Statutory Fishing Right nominated to the boat nominated to this concession;

b) on every subsequent entry to the SBT Zone continue to hold at least 1 uncaught Southern Bluefin Tuna Statutory Fishing Right nominated to the boat nominated to this concession;

c) ensure all dead SBT are landed (retained) except those that are damaged by sharks to the point that they are not fit for human consumption;

d) ensure live SBT are either landed (retained) or released (providing they are in a live and vigorous state).

e) ensure any SBT that are to be released or discarded must be done so at the fish door in full view of the e-monitoring system. SBT damaged by sharks must have the damaged portion facing the cameras. SBT that are undamaged and dead when discarded or live fish that are gaffed and released will be deducted from the concession holder's quota. The amount of quota decremented will be determined by the average weight of SBT retained for that trip.

f) ensure all SBT, whether retained, released or discarded are reported in the logbook.

g) carry an AFMA observer when notified by AFMA.

E-Monitoring

The baseline (e-monitoring) audit rate for all fisheries is a minimum 10% of shots per boat and a minimum of one shot per drive for each boat per month. The analyses include analysis of full catch

composition for each shot selected for review. Catch composition, discards (including life status) and interactions with protected species on audited shots will be compared to logbook records with discrepancies flagged and reported. The focus of e-monitoring is on fishing activities. However, if behaviour that contravenes Australian or International law is observed in the process of viewing footage, it will be referred to the AFMA Compliance team for investigation.

4.2.2 Describe the method applied for estimating the catch

In 2025, e-monitoring observed 8.8% of longline hook effort in the areas of the ETBF through which SBT migrate. This includes shots where SBT were not the primary target. When only considering operations where SBT were caught in the ETBF, EM observed 10.2% of longline hook effort. For the fishery as a whole, 8.2% of hooks were observed in 2025. The observed (via e-monitoring) total catch number of SBT was 3,285 individuals, of which 3,125 were retained, 160 fish were discarded (36 of which were reported as released alive, 3 were discarded dead, 44 were discarded damaged and 73 of which were reported as having an undetermined life status). Three of the remaining fish escaped alive and vigorous and one escaped alive but sluggish. None were tagged.

4.2.3 Provide the resulting estimated catch

Logbook and electronic monitoring data for the 2025 fishing season indicate that 1,239 individual fish were discarded dead. A majority of these were due to shark damage to the point they were unfit for human consumption. These discards are not deducted from quota as the weight could not be estimated due to the condition of the fish.

The purse-seine sector is required to record all fish mortalities observed during purse seine, tow and transfer operations. Mortalities are fish that have died in the purse-seine net or in the tow cage and these fish are deducted from quota and accounted for in Australia's total commercial catch. Once transferred into tow pontoons (where fish spend most of their time prior to harvest), no further estimate of discard mortality is obtained as all fish have been accounted for in Australia's total commercial catch.

4.3 Customary and/or traditional fishing

Not applicable

4.4 Artisanal fishing

Not applicable

5 Other relevant information

Nil.

Appendix A: SBT fishing season dates 1988–89 to 2024–25

Quota Year	Start Date	End Date
1988–89	1 Oct 1988	30 Sep 1989
1989–90	1 Oct 1989	30 Sep 1990
1990–91	1 Oct 1990	30 Sep 1991
1991–92	1 Oct 1991	31 Oct 1992
1992–93	1 Nov 1992	31 Oct 1993
1993–94	1 Nov 1993	31 Oct 1994
1994–95	1 Nov 1994	15 Dec 1995
1995–96	16 Dec 1995	15 Dec 1996
1996–97	16 Dec 1996	30 Nov 1997
1997–98	1 Dec 1997	30 Nov 1998
1998–99	1 Dec 1998	30 Nov 1999
1999–00	1 Dec 1999	30 Nov 2000
2000–01	1 Dec 2000	30 Nov 2001
2001–02	1 Dec 2001	30 Nov 2002
2002–03	1 Dec 2002	30 Nov 2003
2003–04	1 Dec 2003	30 Nov 2004
2004–05	1 Dec 2004	30 Nov 2005
2005–06	1 Dec 2005	30 Nov 2006
2006–07	1 Dec 2006	30 Nov 2007
2007–08	1 Dec 2007	30 Nov 2008
2008–09	1 Dec 2008	30 Nov 2009
2009–11[a]	1 Dec 2009	30 Nov 2011
2011–12	1 Dec 2011	30 Nov 2012
2012–13	1 Dec 2012	30 Nov 2013
2013–14	1 Dec 2013	30 Nov 2014
2014–15	1 Dec 2014	30 Nov 2015
2015–16	1 Dec 2015	30 Nov 2016
2016–17	1 Dec 2016	30 Nov 2017
2017–18	1 Dec 2017	30 Nov 2018
2018–19	1 Dec 2018	30 Nov 2019
2019–20	1 Dec 2019	30 Nov 2020
2020–21	1 Dec 2020	30 Nov 2021
2021–22	1 Dec 2021	30 Nov 2022
2022–23	1 Dec 2022	30 Nov 2023
2023–24	1 Dec 2023	30 Nov 2024
2024–25	1 Dec 2024	30 Nov 2025

a Note that 2009–11 was a 2-year season

Appendix B: Purse seine fishing season duration

Quota Year	First Day of Season	Last Day of Season	1st Day	50%	75%	90%	Last Day	Duration
1993–94	1 Nov 93	31 Oct 94	49	113	127	138	175	127
1994–95	1 Nov 94	15 Dec 95	36	106	133	160	410[a]	375[a]
1995–96	16 Dec 95	15 Dec 96	1	67	87	131	365	365
1996–97	16 Dec 96	30 Nov 97	2	66	85	95	141	140
1997–98	1 Dec 97	30 Nov 98	19	67	84	98	364	346
1998–99	1 Dec 98	30 Nov 99	10	52	73	78	113	104
1999–00	1 Dec 99	30 Nov 00	4	56	65	79	118	115
2000–01	1 Dec 00	30 Nov 01	4	60	80	88	97	94
2001–02	1 Dec 01	30 Nov 02	9	61	75	80	121	113
2002–03	1 Dec 02	30 Nov 03	11	60	82	97	116	106
2003–04	1 Dec 03	30 Nov 04	9	66	87	102	115	107
2004–05	1 Dec 04	30 Nov 05	5	61	83	98	119	115
2005–06	1 Dec 05	30 Nov 06	18	70	92	99	358	341
2006–07	1 Dec 06	30 Nov 07	1	74	93	104	125	125
2007–08	1 Dec 07	30 Nov 08	10	58	91	94	99	90
2008–09	1 Dec 08	30 Nov 09	3	76	103	113	130	128
2009–11[b]	1 Dec 09	30 Nov 10	3	52	69	78	84	82
2009–11[c]	1 Dec 10	30 Nov 11	22	61	87	100	356	335
2011–12	1 Dec 11	30 Nov 12	22	71	85	99	110	89
2012–13	1 Dec 12	30 Nov 13	21	57	71	79	102	82
2013–14	1 Dec 13	30 Nov 14	18	58	63	64	69	52
2014–15	1 Dec 14	30 Nov 15	38	72	89	94	112	75
2015–16	1 Dec 15	30 Nov 16	19	62	72	75	86	68
2016–17	1 Dec 16	30 Nov 17	21	47	57	66	90	70
2017–18	1 Dec 17	30 Nov 18	15	67	80	92	113	99
2018–19	1 Dec 18	30 Nov 19	22	69	84	90	108	87
2019–20	1 Dec 19	30 Nov 20	15	58	85	102	107	93
2020–21	1 Dec 20	30 Nov 21	18	71	86	101	119	102
2021–22	1 Dec 21	30 Nov 22	41	71	79	85	93	53
2022–23	1 Dec 22	30 Nov 23	23	58	77	92	120	98
2023–24	1 Dec 23	30 Nov 24	27	69	83	99	102	75
2024–25	1 Dec 24	30 Nov 25	25	61	99	102	118	93

Note: '1st Day' = Day of First Capture, '50%', etc denote the day of the season on which that percentage of the catch had been taken, 'Last Day' = the Day of Last Capture.

a Figures greater than 365 days because the season dates changed and extended this season for longer than one year.

b Year 1 of the 2009–11 season (2009–10)

c Year 2 of the 2009–11 season (2010–11)

Appendix C: Australian surface catch for farm operations, 1994–95 to 2024–25

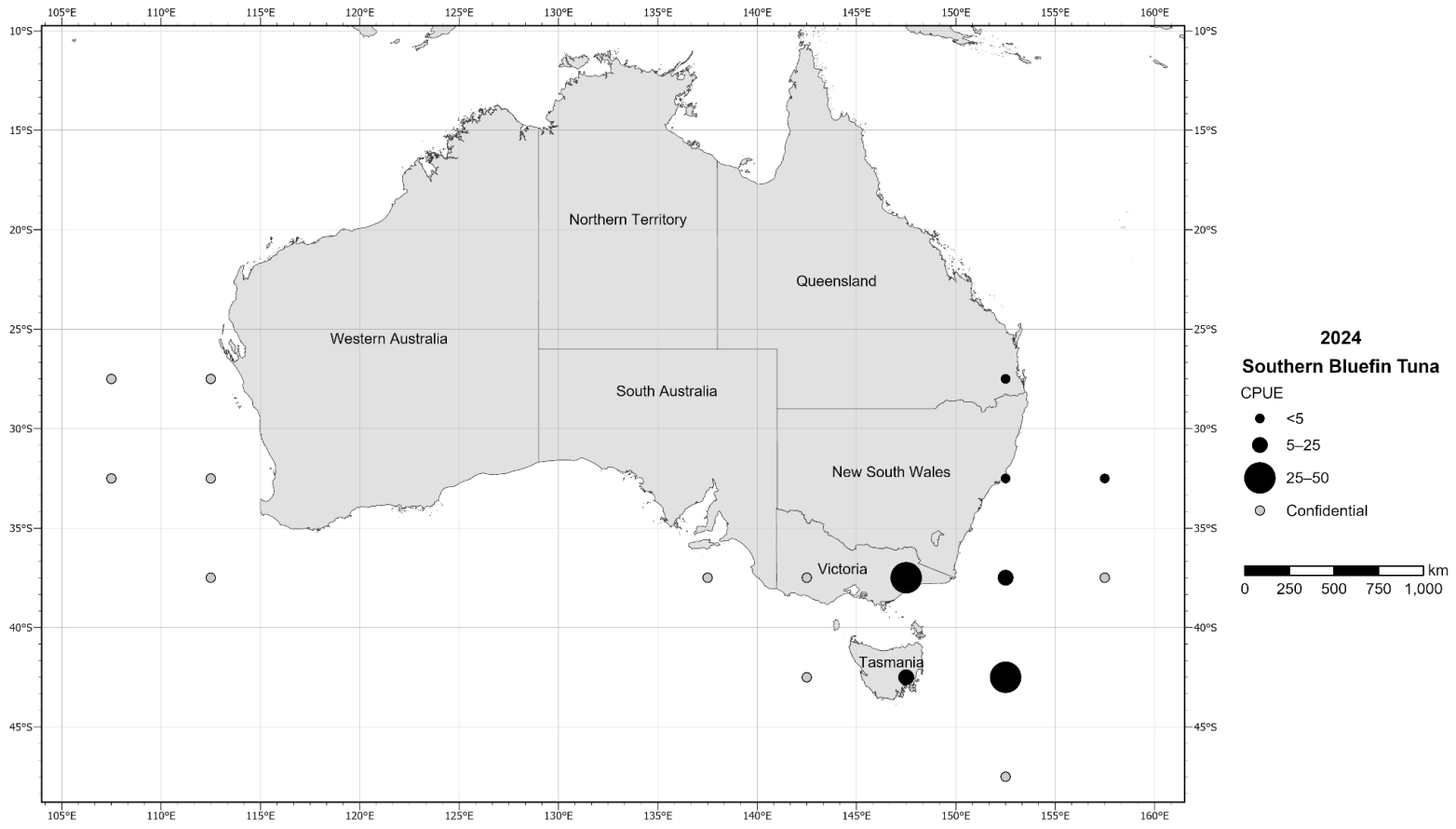
Season	Estimated catch (t)	Actual catch (t)	Catcher vessels	Vessel search hours	Sets	No. 1° squares fished
1994–95	2,179	2,009	5	526	104	5
1995–96	2,859	3,442	6	631	89	11
1996–97	3,134	2,505	7	769	118	13
1997–98	3,916	3,629	7	671	143	8
1998–99	4,418	4,991	7	972	129	3
1999–00	4,746	5,131	8	764	107	5
2000–01	5,100	5,162	8	799	129	2
2001–02	5,400	5,234	7	1,309	159	3
2002–03	5,188	5,375	7	1,276	150	5
2003–04	5,299	4,874	6	1,202	160	4
2004–05	5,225	5,215	8	1,168	139	4
2005–06	5,463	5,302	7	1,304	156	6
2006–07	5,091	5,230	6	1,459	160	8
2007–08	4,530	5,211	7	1,217	134	2
2008–09	4,348	5,017	7	1,156	139	7
2009–11[a]	3,323	3,931	6	417	78	3
2009–11[b]	3,840	3,872	5	835	106	5
2011–12	4,328	4,485	5	1,150	156	7
2012–13	4,039	4,198	5	1,021	110	11
2013–14	4,381	5,029	6	752	101	4
2014–15	4,789	4,950	6	1,235	154	6
2015–16	4,826	4,896	6	1,076	124	6
2016–17	4,036	4,683	6	1,004	109	5
2017–18	4,920	5,123	7	1,137	191	6
2018–19	4,750	5,291	7	1,366	154	9
2019–20	4,224	4,568	7	1,248	142	12
2020–21	4,203	4,592	7	1,101	152	14
2021–22	4,639	4,942	8	1,041	136	8
2022–23	4,832	4,697	6	1,688	173	11
2023–24	4,085	4,505	5	1,165	118	13
2024–25	4,350	4,447	5	1,688	130	14

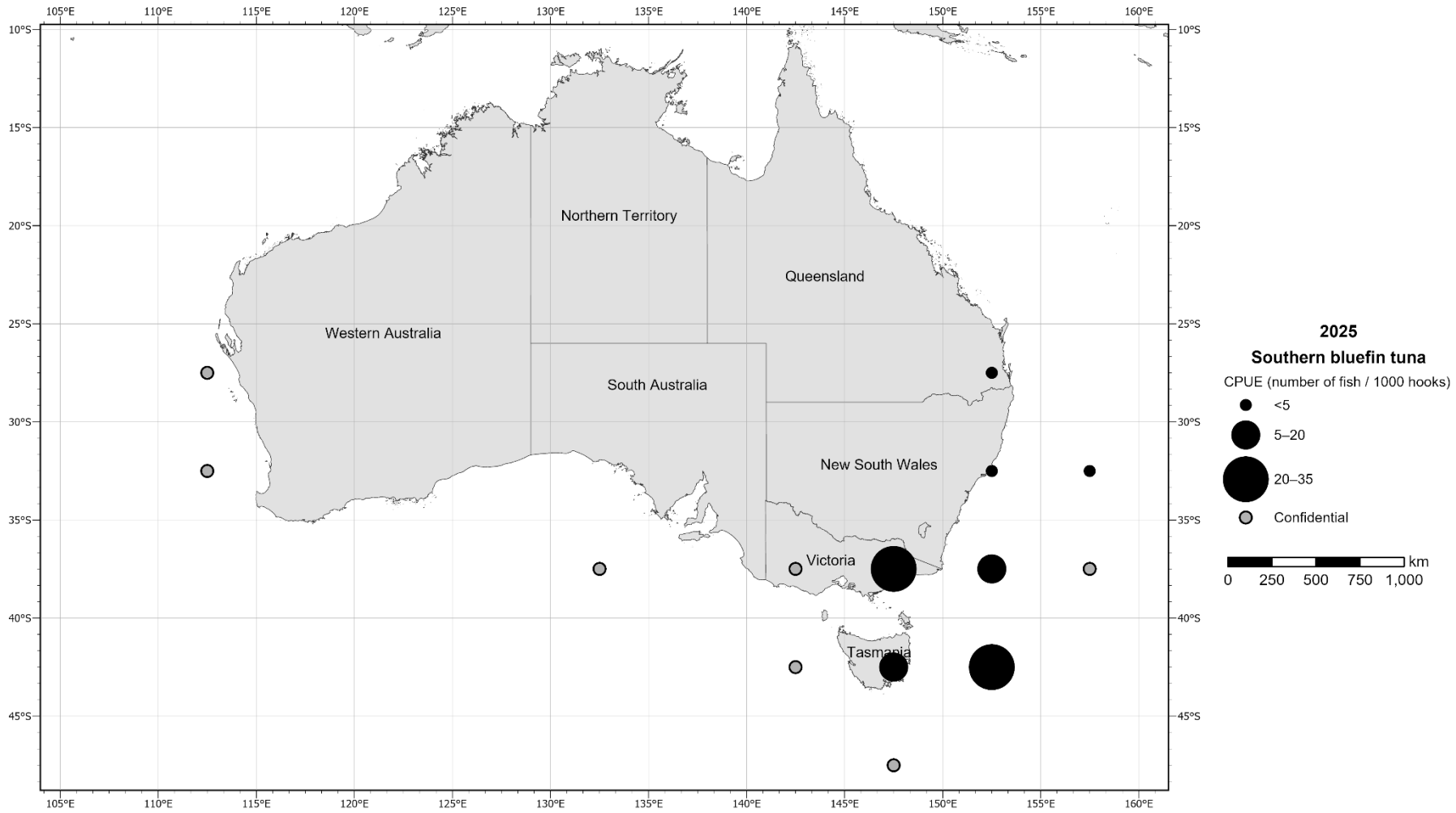
Note: Estimated catch is derived from logbook data while actual catch is derived from landing data.

a Year 1 of the 2009–11 season (2009–10)

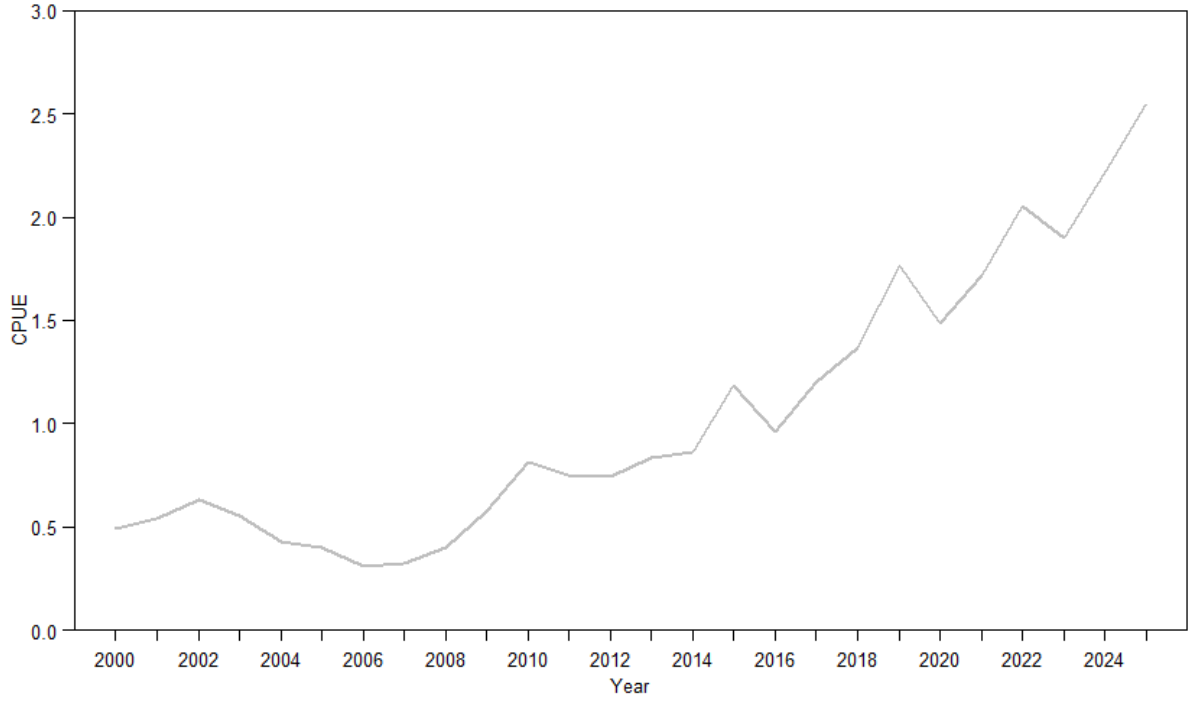
b Year 2 of the 2009–11 season (2010–11)

Appendix D: Nominal CPUE by year and location for all Australian longliners, 2024 and 2025 calendar years




105°E
110°E
115°E
120°E
125°E
130°E
135°E
140°E
145°E
150°E
155°E
160°E
10°S
15°S
20°S
25°S
30°S
35°S
40°S
45°S
Northern Territory
Queensland
Western Australia
South Australia
New South Wales
Victoria
Tasmania
2025
Southern bluefin tuna
CPUE (number of fish / 1000 hooks)
<5
5–20
20–35
Confidential
km
0 250 500 750 1,000

Appendix E: Nominal CPUE by calendar year for Australian longliners since 2000



Note: CPUE data shown are nominal, normalised data.

Appendix F: Summary of observed catch and effort by year and sector

Country	Year	Sector	Observers Deployed	Sea Days	Sets/Tows Observed	Observed Vessels	Observed Effort (%, units)	Observed Catch (%, units)	Total Cost
Australia	2002–03	Purse Seine[a]	N/A	47	24		11% (sets)	11% (est. total weight)	60,000 (A$)
Australia	2002–03	Towing[a]	N/A	19	1		2.6% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2002	East Coast Longline	17	323	198		14.4% (hooks)	35.5% (no. retained catch)	NA
Australia	2002	West Coast Longline	N/A	N/A	N/A		N/A (hooks)	N/A (no. retained catch)	NA
Australia	2003–04	Purse Seine[a]	2	27	21		13% (sets)	12.8% (est. total weight)	60,000 (A$)
Australia	2003–04	Towing[a]	2	30	2		5.6% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2003	East Coast Longline	10	242	168		14.9% (hooks)	55.2% (no. retained catch)	303,000 (60,000 A$ SBT component)
Australia	2003	West Coast Longline	4	72	54		2.0% (hooks)	4.5% (no. retained catch)	42,247 (A$)
Australia	2004–05	Purse Seine[a]	2	36	15		11.2% (sets)	8.5% (est. total weight)	60,000 (A$)
Australia	2004–05	Towing[a]	2	24	2		5.7% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2004	East Coast Longline	11		68		11.7% (hooks)	5.4% (no. retained catch)	966,000 (150,000 A$ SBT component)
Australia	2004	West Coast Longline			59		3.9% (hooks)	0% (no. retained catch)	57,384(A$)
Australia	2005–06	Purse Seine[a]	2	47	14		9.2% (sets)	10.1% (est. total weight)	78,000 (A$)
Australia	2005	East Coast Longline	14		128		37.5% (hooks)	62.8% (no. retained catch)	723,289 (160,000 A$ SBT component)
Australia	2005	West Coast Longline			47		9.1% (hooks)	(no observed catch)	0

Country	Year	Sector	Observers Deployed	Sea Days	Sets/Tows Observed	Observed Vessels	Observed Effort (%, units)	Observed Catch (%, units)	Total Cost
Australia	2006–07	Purse Seine[a]	2	50	9		5.6% (sets)	12.1% (est. total weight)	NA
Australia	2006–07	Towing[a]	2	41	2		6.5% (tows)		NA
Australia	2006	East Coast Longline	20		138		22.1% (hooks)	88.9% (no. retained catch)	NA
Australia	2006	West Coast Longline	1		8		17.4% (hooks)	(no observed catch)	NA
Australia	2007–08	Purse Seine[a]	2	19	16		11.8% (sets)	5.6% (est. total weight)	68,000 (A$)
Australia	2007–08	Towing[a]	2	38	2		6.0% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2007	East Coast Longline	17		156		30.2% (hooks–SBT Area)	23.2% (no. retained catch)	180,000 (A$)
Australia	2007	West Coast Longline			10		1.9% (hooks)	No SBT caught	15,589 (A$)
Australia	2008–09	Purse Seine	2	27	11 (fish retained) 8 (aborted)	3	7.9% (sets, fish retained)	15.3% (est. total weight)	77,215 (A$)
Australia	2008–09	Towing	1	15	1	1	3.2% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2008	East Coast Longline	31		676		47.9% (hooks – SBT Area)	34% (no. retained catch)	694,500 (A$ – 08/09 fin year)
Australia	2008	West Coast Longline	3		25		16.7% (sets)	No SBT caught	16,800 (A$ – 08/09 fin year)
Australia	2009–11[b]	Purse Seine	1	3	7 (fish retained) 1 (aborted)	2	9.0% (sets, fish retained)	13.5% (est. total weight)	95,392 (A$)
Australia	2009–11[b]	Towing	1	27	1	1	4.2% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2009	East Coast Longline	20		400		17.2% (hooks – SBT Area)	23% (no. retained catch)	332,562 (A$ – 09/10 fin year)
Australia	2009	West Coast Longline	2		31		8.2% (sets)	No SBT caught	21,019 (A$ – 09/10 fin year)
Australia	2009–11[c]	Purse Seine	2	49	21 (fish retained) 11 (aborted)	2	19.8% (fish retained)	12.2% (est. total weight)	48,830 (A$)
Australia	2009–11[c]	Towing	2	22	1	1	3.7% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2010	East Coast Longline	16		65		7.7% (hooks – SBT Area)	20.1% (no. retained catch)	417,240 (A$ – 10/11 fin year)
Australia	2010	West Coast Longline	1		10		2.5% (hook effort)	No SBT caught	14,533 (A$ – 10/11 fin year)

Country	Year	Sector	Observers Deployed	Sea Days	Sets/Tows Observed	Observed Vessels	Observed Effort (%, units)	Observed Catch (%, units)	Total Cost
Australia	2011–12	Purse Seine	1	17	17 (fish retained) 2 (aborted)	1	11.1% (fish retained)	13.8% (est. total weight)	45,000 (A$)
Australia	2011–12	Towing	1	13	1	1	3.4% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2011	East Coast Longline	9		76		9.6% (hooks – SBT Area)	17.7% (no. retained catch)	$750,000 (A$)
Australia	2011	West Coast Longline	1		4		1.7% (hook effort)	No SBT caught	$11,500 (A$)
Australia	2012–13	Purse Seine	2	30	14 (fish retained) 1 (aborted)	2	12.7% (fish retained)	13.9% (est. total weight)	$75,000 (A$)
Australia	2012–13	Towing	2	26	2	2	3.8% (tows)		(included above)
Australia	2012	East Coast Longline	9		50		6.2% (hooks – SBT Area)	16.1% (no. retained catch)	$800,000 (A$)
Australia	2012	West Coast Longline	3		61		17.9% (hook effort)	No SBT caught	$90,000 (A$)
Australia	2013–14	Purse Seine	2	17	16 (fish retained) 1 (aborted)	2	17.0% (fish retained)	21.9% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2013–14	Towing	1	9	1	1	4% (tows)		
Australia	2013	East Coast Longline	10		87		10.4% (hooks – SBT Area)	19.5% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2013	West Coast Longline	0		0		0%	No observer coverage	
Australia	2014–15	Purse Seine	1	17	14 (fish retained)	1	9.1% (fish retained)	19.9% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2014–15	Towing	1	20	1	1	4% (tows)		
Australia	2014	East Coast Longline	5		24		3.1% (hooks – SBT Area)	4.5% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2014	West Coast Longline	2		27		9.1%	31.8% (no. retained catch)	
Australia	2015–16	Purse Seine	2	15	25	2	18.9% (fish retained)	20.2% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2015–16	Towing	2	21	2	2	7.1% (tows)		
Australia	2015	East Coast Longline			330		5.9% (hooks – SBT Area)	6.5% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2015	West Coast Longline			19		7.2%	No observed catch	na

Country	Year	Sector	Observers Deployed	Sea Days	Sets/Tows Observed	Observed Vessels	Observed Effort (%, units)	Observed Catch (%, units)	Total Cost
Australia	2016–17	Purse Seine	2	11	20	2	18.3% (fish retained)	16.8% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2016–17	Towing	2	18	2	2	9.1% (tows)		
Australia	2016	East Coast Longline			397		9.3% (hooks – SBT Area)	12.1% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2016	West Coast Longline			24		10.2%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2017–18	Purse Seine	2	37	40	2	20.9% (fish retained)	19.0% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2017–18	Towing	1	20	1	2	3.4% (tows)		
Australia	2017	East Coast Longline			527		9.0% (hooks – SBT Area)	9.7% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2017	West Coast Longline			32		11.7%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2018–19	Purse Seine	2	35	22	2	14.3% (fish retained)	14.5% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2018–19	Towing	2	25	2	2	7.7% (tows)		
Australia	2018	East Coast Longline			488		11.5% (hooks – SBT Area)	13.8% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2018	West Coast Longline			36		13.0%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2019–20	Purse Seine	2	34	14	2	9.9% (fish retained)	10.3% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2019–20	Towing	2	21	2	2	7.7% (tows)		
Australia	2019	East Coast Longline			525		12.1% (hooks – SBT Area)	12.2% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2019	West Coast Longline			31		12.8%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2020	East Coast Longline			418		11.0% (hooks – SBT Area)	7.7% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2020	West Coast Longline			19		12.1%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2020–21	Purse Seine	2	95	41	3	12.6% (fish retained)	14.1% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2020–21	Towing	2	18	2	2	7.4% (tows)		na

Country	Year	Sector	Observers Deployed	Sea Days	Sets/Tows Observed	Observed Vessels	Observed Effort (%, units)	Observed Catch (%, units)	Total Cost
Australia	2021	East Coast Longline			404		12.0% (hooks – SBT Area)	12.9% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2021	West Coast Longline			23		8.3%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2021–22	Purse Seine	2	32	13	4	9.6% (sets fish where retained)	10.8% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2021–22	Towing	2	34	3	2	7.7% (tows)		na
Australia	2022	East Coast Longline			345		10.8% (hooks – SBT Area)	9.7% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2022	West Coast Longline			17		11.1%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2022–23	Purse Seine	2	36	14	2	8.1% (sets fish where retained)	12.7% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2022–23	Towing	2	23	3	3	11.5% (tows)		na
Australia	2023	East Coast Longline			390		9.0% (hooks – SBT Area)	9.5% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2023	West Coast Longline			16		9.0%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2023-24	Purse Seine	2	30	22	2	11.9% (sets where fish retained)	14.5% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2023-24	Towing	1	17	2	2	7.7% (tows)		na
Australia	2024	East Coast Longline			445		11.6% (hooks – SBT Area)	11.7% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2024	West Coast Longline			23		13.9%	No observed catch	na
Australia	2024-25	Purse Seine	3	26	22	2	13.8% (sets where fish retained)	17.5% (est. total weight)	na
Australia	2024-25	Towing	2	18	2	2	25		na
Australia	2025	East Coast Longline			400		8.8% (hooks – SBT area)[d]	8.1% (no. retained catch)	na
Australia	2025	West Coast Longline			10		8.5%	**	na

a Australian purse seine and towing observer statistics are for the SBT fishing year December–November

b Year 1 of the 2009–11 season (2009–10)

c Year 2 of the 2009–11 season (2010–11)

d From 2025 onwards the 'SBT area' has been redefined as just south of 30°S, rather than south of 30°S and between May-Sep. This is due to an expansion of the SBT longline fishery outside winter months.
na = not available; ** confidential

Appendix G: Number of biological samples taken in observer programs (year and sector)

Country	Year	Sector	Otoliths	Sex	Tags	Stomach contents	Length measurement
Australia	2002	Longline	0	124	165	0	300
Australia	2003	Longline	0	51	229	1	388
Australia	2004	Longline	5	62	0	5	187
Australia	2004–05	Purse seine	2	2	0	0	3
Australia	2005	Longline	63	189	19	12	264
Australia	2005–06	Purse seine	46	46	0	0	23
Australia	2006	Longline	0	4	1	0	32
Australia	2006–07	Purse seine	9	17	0	16	19
Australia	2007	Longline	9	41	0	0	42
Australia	2007–08	Purse seine	4	4	0	0	4
Australia	2008	Longline	0	84	0	1	99
Australia	2008–09	Purse seine	14	14	0	0	14
Australia	2009	Longline	0	746	0	0	810
Australia	2009–11[a]	Purse seine	3	3	0	0	3
Australia	2010	Longline	0	563	0	0	563
Australia	2009–11[b]	Purse seine	4	5	0	0	5
Australia	2011	Longline	0	255	0	0	255
Australia	2011–12	Purse seine	5	8	0	0	8
Australia	2012	Longline	0	70	0	0	69
Australia	2012–13	Purse seine	4	6	0	0	119
Australia	2013	Longline	0	1,089	0	0	1,089
Australia	2013–14	Purse seine	1	1	0	0	1
Australia	2014	Longline	0	290	0	0	290
Australia	2014–15	Purse seine	26	21	0	0	27
Australia	2015–16	Purse seine	3	15	0	0	15
Australia	2016–17	Purse seine	0	23	0	0	23
Australia	2017–18	Purse seine	0	26	0	0	26
Australia	2018–19	Purse seine	0	8	0	0	8
Australia	2019–20	Purse seine	0	0	0	0	1
Australia	2020–21	Purse seine	0	0	0	0	36
Australia	2021–22	Purse seine	4	4	0	0	13
Australia	2022–23	Purse seine	23	23	0	0	56
Australia	2023–24	Purse seine	0	1	0	0	1
Australia	2024–25	Purse seine	0	0	0	0	0

a Year 1 of the 2009–11 season (2009–10); **b** Year 2 of the 2009–11 season (2010–11)

Appendix H: An overview of the Australian SBT observer program

Observer sources and training

AFMA has recruited and trained observers since its establishment in 1992. Approximately 20 observers are currently employed in the AFMA observer program. They require the ability to live and work at sea, have demonstrated experience in collecting biological data at sea, and have experience in fisheries research methodologies and collection of associated scientific data. Observers also hold marine radio operators certificate of proficiency (or similar qualifications and/or experience), a sea safety certificate and medical certificate, and have completed an AFMA observer training course.

AFMA implemented a trial of e-monitoring (i.e. on-board, fixed-mount digital video cameras) in the ETBF in 2009–10 to evaluate the effectiveness of this technology for a range of fishery monitoring purposes and to conduct a cost–benefit analysis (Piasente et al. 2012). E-monitoring became compulsory for the Australian longline fleet from 2015. E-monitoring replaces human observers for all in-zone observer requirements.

Purse seine fishery – Scientific observer program design and coverage

The target coverage for the SBT purse seine fleet operating out of Port Lincoln is 10% of the total catch and effort for the fishery. Observers monitor 100% of all fishing operations while on board. Most of the Australian SBT purse seine effort has historically taken place in an area between 33–35°S and 131–133°E, although this has changed slightly in recent years (Figure 9).

The observers in the purse-seine fishery in the 2024–25 fishing season spent 44 days at sea and observed purse seiner activities for 15 days and tow activities for 16 days. The remainder of the days were spent in transit, searching, repairing fishing gear or lost due to rough weather.

Purse seine fishery – Observer data collected

Effort data

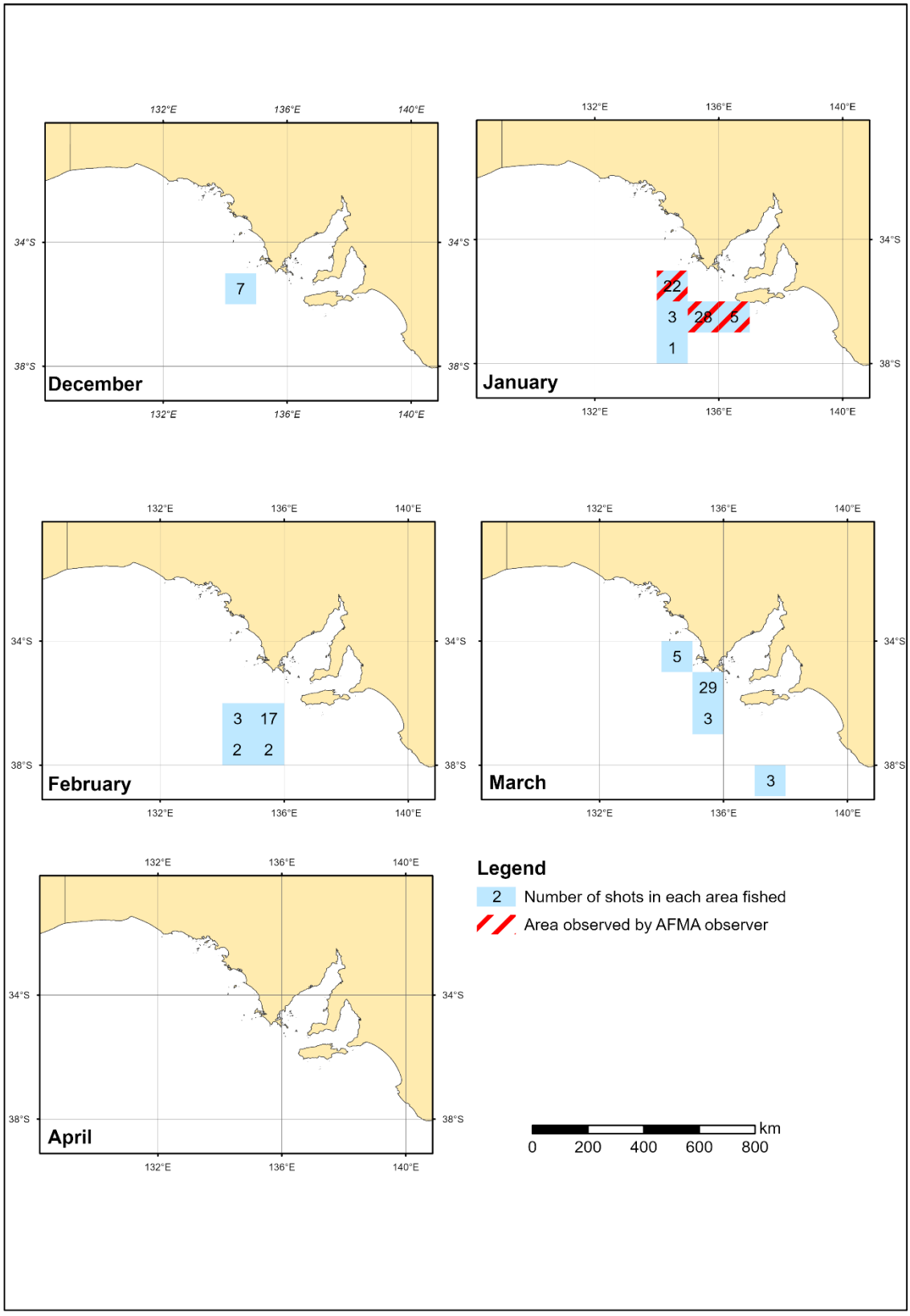
The purse-seine observer program for the 2024–25 Australian SBT fishing season monitored fishing and tow operations in 34°39'–36°45'S and 134°10'–136°26'E in January 2025. Three observers monitored 18 purse seine sets where fish were retained. This represents 13.8% of the total sets in which fish were taken in 2024–25 (Figure 9). There were three sets observed where all the fish escaped or were released.

Data were gathered on vessel characteristics, fishing gear and equipment. Comprehensive operational and environmental information were recorded for each set that occurred while the observer was on board. This included information on searching, chumming, setting and hauling activities. Information on chumming operations by the fishing vessel and associated chumming vessels was also recorded. In addition, observers recorded information on the movement of some spotter aircraft and their time in the area preceding sets.

Two tows were observed and data collected on the number of SBT mortalities and the date they occurred. Data were also collected on:

- Towing methods
- Average towing speed
- Cage number and diameter
- Maximum cage depth
- Average weight of SBT transferred
- Estimated number of SBT
- Methods of counting and verifying fish counts.

Figure 9 The number of sets recorded in the SBT purse seine fishery from December 2024 to April 2025. The hatching represents areas where observations took place.



Catch data

Observers recorded catch composition and fate of target and bycatch species where possible during all observed sets. The time at start and end of observation, the observed catch in estimated number and estimated weight for SBT and all other species were recorded where possible.

Because fish are taken alive for farming purposes in the purse seine sector, it is not possible to obtain actual weight or length information at the time of catching the SBT. Consequently, both catch data and observed catch data are estimates only and these are reported below.

In total, an estimated 761 t of SBT were caught during observed purse-seine sets. This observed catch accounted for 17.5% of the total estimated purse seine catch of 4,350 t. There were 3 sets observed where fish escaped or were released.

There were 29 mortalities observed during purse-seine operations, 24 of which were sampled. Two observers monitored 2 tow operations and recorded 6 SBT mortalities during the towing operation, none of which was sampled.

Length frequency data

It is not possible for onboard observers to obtain length measurements for the live SBT catch, but observers are required to take biological samples from all SBT mortalities. During purse-seine and towing operations, the observers recorded 35 SBT mortalities, 24 of which were sampled. The fork length for these fish was not recorded.

Biological data

No otoliths were obtained from the purse-seine and towing mortalities. There is an ongoing project to collect otoliths from farm mortalities.

Weights were obtained from all of the 24 fish sampled the purse-seine and towing operations. Weights ranged from 7 kg to 20 kg, with an average weight of 15 kg.

Longline fishery – Electronic monitoring design and coverage

The target coverage for the Australian longline fleet is to review at least 10% of video footage of all hauls to verify the accuracy of logbooks. Logbooks are required to be completed for 100% of shots.

In 2025, in the areas of the ETBF through which SBT migrate (defined in this report as south of 30°S), 344,852 hooks of a total of 3,933,352 were observed by e-monitoring, representing 8.8% observer coverage of longline effort in the SBT migration area. When only considering operations where SBT were caught, 176,188 hooks were observed by e-monitoring of a total 1,731,377, representing 10.2% observer coverage of longline effort in the ETBF where SBT was caught. For the ETBF as a whole, 8.2% of hooks were observed in 2025.

During 2025, there was 7.5% observer coverage of longline hook effort in the Western Tuna and Billfish Fishery (WTBF).

Longline fishery – Observer data collected

Catch data

In 2025, south of 30°S, the observed total catch number of SBT in the ETBF was 3,285 individuals, of which 3,125 were retained, and 160 fish were discarded (36 of which were reported as released alive, 3 of which were dead, 44 of which were discarded damaged and 73 of which were reported as having an undetermined life status). Three of the remaining individuals escaped alive and vigorous, and one escaped alive but sluggish. No SBT were tagged during observed longline operations in 2025. ETBF logbooks for 2025 showed 38,449 SBT (1,790.05 t) were retained and 9,714 (20.2%) were released.

In 2025, 3,873 other species were observed caught and retained by longline, south of 30°S in ETBF operations that caught SBT. This included albacore (2,744), yellowfin tuna (331), swordfish (325), ray's bream (257), bigeye tuna (78), tuna – unspecified (34) and skipjack tuna (25).

During 2025, south of 30°S, there were observed captures of SBT in the WTBF, however due to the few boats operating in the area this information is confidential.

Tag return monitoring

There were no tagged SBT observed in 2025.

Appendix I: Australian southern bluefin tuna research projects

The projects below represent the major research investment areas by Australia for the past several years that directly contribute to the work of the Commission.

Category	Project title	Year(s)	Amount (AU$)
Data supporting	Tagging juvenile SBT off South Africa	2006	$100,000
SBTF	CCSBT conventional tagging programme	2006	$170,832
	Archiving of hard parts for SBT in 2006/07	2006	$28,231
	Archiving of hard parts for SBT in 2007/08–2009/10	2007	$307,302
	Archiving of hard parts for routine ageing and developing age-length keys for the Australian SBT surface fishery 2010/11–2012/13	2010	$304,643
	Development of SBT catch and effort monitoring program	2009	$150,000
	Aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) 2008	2008	$427,274
	Aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) 2009	2009	$582,440
	Aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) 2010	2010	$621,625
	Aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) 2011	2011	$753,208
	Aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) 2012	2012	$778,120
	Aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) 2013	2013	$808,360
	Aerial survey in the Great Australian Bight (GAB) 2014	2014	$661,635
SBT Research	Acoustic monitoring of juvenile SBT in the GAB	2002–07	$150,000
	Spatial interactions among juvenile SBT at a global scale: a large-scale archival tag experiment	2003–11	$2,549,000
	Analysis of overcatch data	2006	$108,553
	Monitoring of the Japanese SBT market	2006	$70,000
	Fishery-independent estimate of spawning biomass of southern bluefin tuna through identification of close-kin using genetic markers	2006–11	$1,491,146
	Australian farm research program	2007	$200,000
	Assessing operational feasibility of stereo video and evaluating monitoring options for the SBT farm sector	2007	$395,130
	Further monitoring of the Japanese SBT market	2008	$220,000

	Tasman residency and spawning migrations of adult SBT	2008–09	$165,000
	Management Procedure development	2009	$224,899
	SBT stereo-video project	2010	$75,000
	Developing a management procedure-based recovery plan for SBT	2011	$358,130
	Otolith chemistry of juvenile southern bluefin tuna	2011–12	$20,000
	Investigating new data sources and spatial operating models	2011–13	$315,000
	Automation of measurements from underwater stereo-video	2011–14	$30,000
	Forecasting spatial distribution of SBT habitat in the GAB (proposal)	2013–14	$145,948
	Updating the CCSBT operating model and intersessional science	2014–15	$529,301
	Intersessional science – Impact of no 2015 aerial survey on the MP	2015	$118,385
	Intersessional science – Updated stock assessment and MP work	2017	$180,000
	Intersessional science – New MP work	2018	$180,000
	Intersessional science – MP development	2019	$185,000
	Intersessional science – MP development and stock assessment	2019–21	$360,000
	Intersessional science – MP work and stock assessment	2021–24	$425,000
Capacity building	Monitoring of longline catch of SBT landed in Indonesia	2003–04	$130,508
	Monitoring of longline catch of SBT landed in Indonesia	2004–05	$112,628
	Monitoring of longline catch of SBT landed in Indonesia	2006–08	$397,389
Recreational fishing	Quantifying the recreational catch of SBT off the Victorian coast	2010–11	$212,000
	Developing a methodology for obtaining regular, statistically robust estimates of recreational and charter fishing catch	2011–12	$100,000
	Development of methods for obtaining national estimates of recreational catch	2013–15	$570,000
	Capture-induced physiological stress and post-release survival of recreationally caught Southern Bluefin Tuna	2013–15	$383,486
	National survey for recreational catch of southern bluefin tuna	2018–20	$2,311,936

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