

# **Fisheries green paper consultation Feedback and results**

**June 2017**

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## Summary

The Green Paper on fisheries management reform in Queensland (the Green Paper) was released for public consultation from July to October 2016. The Green Paper outlined where we are now, where we want to be, and how we can get there.

Over 11,800 responses were received, including 192 written submissions, 476 responses to the online long survey, 663 responses to the online short survey and over 10,500 form emails from the conservation sector. Officers from Fisheries Queensland met with over 230 people at 126 meetings across Queensland during the consultation period to gather their views.

The overwhelming message was that all stakeholders wanted reform in the way we manage fisheries. There was strong support from all sectors for better fishery monitoring, more effective engagement, more responsive decision making and greater fisheries compliance.

The results of the consultation are provided in this report.

Overall, there was strong support for:

- better data from all sectors
- stronger compliance powers and penalties
- new consultation and engagement mechanisms
- a clearer decision-making framework
- clearer access arrangements and harvest strategies
- a clear policy for managing impacts on non-target species
- a regional approach to management.

Overall, there was uncertainty and/or mixed views about:

- the 60% unfished biomass target for key species—the majority agreed with rebuilding stocks where necessary, but were unsure as to what the 'right' level should be
- resource sharing between sectors—respondents supported greater clarity about how resources are shared but were concerned about the details
- specifics of the decision-making framework—respondents wanted more information about how it will work, including the harvest strategies
- the use of net-free zones as an allocation tool—strongly supported by the recreational sector but strongly opposed by the commercial sector.

Feedback on the green paper has helped shape the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017–2027, which sets out the government's reform agenda for the next 10 years.

## Background

In July 2016, the Queensland Government released the green paper for a 12-week period to encourage discussion about the future for sustainable fisheries management in Queensland. The green paper outlined the current issues, where we want to be and the specific proposals under 10 reform areas to get there. The purpose of the green paper consultation was to seek feedback from fishers and the community on the reform proposals and the future direction for Queensland's fisheries. It was a major step in developing a strategic approach to management—to ensure Queensland's fisheries are sustainable and shared in a way that maximises benefits to the community.

## Purpose of this report

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the green paper consultation and summarise the feedback received on the reform proposals. It does not contain any final government position on the proposals.

## Public consultation process

### Communication and meetings

Public consultation on the green paper took place over a 12-week period from 21 July to 14 October 2016 and consisted of:

- 4049 letters sent to all commercial licence holders
- 949 letters and/or emails sent to representative groups, bait and tackle shops, local councils and Indigenous corporations
- 8000 emails to stock impoundment permit holders
- social media posts
- advertisements in fishing-related magazines
- ministerial media releases (picked up by local newspapers and radio)
- website promotional material
- proactive cold-calling of key stakeholders and invitations to meetings
- meetings on request
- individual consultations via telephone appointments.



The green paper was available on the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries website and hard copies were sent to people as requested. To ensure meaningful input, stakeholders were asked to register their interest to talk to officers from the department about the green paper proposals. Individual or small group meetings were arranged in regional locations along the Queensland coast based on those who registered.

## Making a submission

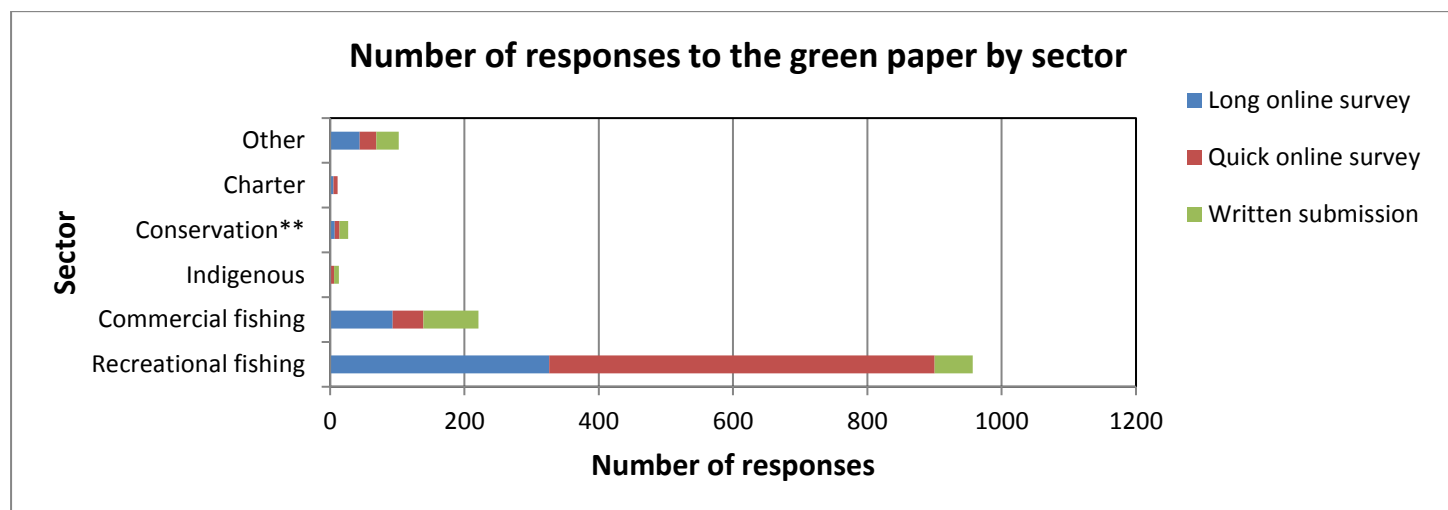
The public were able to have their say on the fisheries green paper by completing an online survey (a quick or long version) or sending a written submission via post or email.

## Consultation statistics summary

### Responses received

A total of 11 800 responses were received, including 192 written submissions, 476 responses to the long online survey, 663 responses to the quick online survey and 10 500 standard response emails from the conservation sector. A total of 230 people met with departmental officers at 126 meetings across Queensland.

The 20 green paper Facebook posts reached 122 169 people. The social media response included 209 comments, 744 'likes' and 250 post 'shares'. The animation was viewed 7478 times on YouTube.



\*\* The number of conservation sector responses in this figure excludes the 10 500 standard response emails

The recreational fishing sector included individual fishers, recreational fishing associations and affiliated businesses. The commercial fishing sector included commercial licence holders, brokers and seafood wholesalers/retailers. The 'other' category included regional councils, government departments, universities and individuals who did not identify with a particular sector. Of the 192 written submissions, approximately one-third were from organisations and the rest were from individuals.

## **Submission analysis**

### **Analysis method and presentation**

There were two types of responses to the green paper reform proposals:

- answers to questions in the quick and long online survey ('yes', 'no', 'unsure', 'nil')
- comments provided in a written submission or in the comments field of the quick and long online surveys.

The results have been analysed by reform area. The responses to the online survey questions are presented graphically and colour-coded by sector (see the 'Feedback and results' section). As the quick online survey questions (eight in total) were a subset of the longer version (21 questions), the data was pooled if appropriate.

Given the breadth of fisheries management issues and the diversity of stakeholders, a wide range of views were provided. As such, analysis of the written responses is largely descriptive. Written submissions ranged from short, issue-specific feedback to lengthy responses to each reform area.

All comments on the reform proposals were categorised into common themes and presented graphically by sector.

### **General feedback**

There was overall support for fisheries management reform. Not surprisingly, the priorities and areas of contention were influenced by the sector and often varied within each sector.

There was strong support for better monitoring of all sectors, more effective engagement and improvements to fisheries compliance arrangements (see Table 1).

There were mixed views on the reform proposals relating to managing target stocks, resource-sharing arrangements between sectors and access/fishing rules. Many respondents indicated that they wanted to see more details on the reform proposals before providing their support.



**Table 1: Overview of level of support and overall response for each reform area**

Reform areas	Overall response
1. Managing target stocks	<b>Mixed feedback</b> —support in principle for rebuilding stocks but some uncertainty around the 60% unfished biomass target for key species (e.g. questioned the need for high targets, more information is needed)
2. Managing impacts on non-target species and the ecosystem	<b>Largely supported</b> —some questions about the impacts of other activities on fish stocks and the broader ecosystem
3. Resource sharing between sectors	<b>Mixed feedback</b> —some support, but questions about how this would be done, the quality of data on which to base access and resource-sharing decisions, and concerns about possible impacts on each sector
4. Accessing resources and fishing rules	<b>Mixed feedback</b> —support for clarity about how resources are accessed by sectors, but mixed views about specific access arrangements for each sector
5. Decision-making framework	<b>Largely supported</b> —support for more responsive decision-making, but uncertainty about the right model to deliver this
6. Harvest strategies	<b>Largely supported</b> —support for harvest strategies, but some questions about the details
7. Data and information	<b>Strongly supported</b> —support for better monitoring of all sectors, and good ideas on how this could be done
8. Consultation and engagement	<b>Largely supported</b> —support for greater consultation and engagement, and a range of ideas about what could work (although there was no clear way forward)
9. Fisheries compliance	<b>Strongly supported</b> —support for stronger compliance powers and more significant penalties in some cases, and a strong desire to see more Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers on the ground and more investment in education
10. Resourcing	<b>Largely supported</b> —support for greater funding for fisheries management, and a wide range of ideas

## Major issues raised by each sector

### Commercial sector

Although there was a wide diversity of views within the commercial sector, there were some common themes:

- Uncertainty about management arrangements for fisheries is undermining business confidence and the current framework in Queensland needs to be 'fixed'.
- The commercial sector opposed the use of net-free zones as a management tool and had a view that resource-sharing arrangements are a disadvantage for the commercial sector.
- The economic and social contribution of commercial fishing to the community is undervalued.
- The recreational sector should contribute more to the management of fisheries, including more monitoring of recreational catch and effort.
- Seafood consumers are not well represented as a stakeholder group and the proposed reforms may reduce their access to local seafood.



### Recreational sector

The recreational sector provided the most responses to the green paper. Common themes included:



- support for net-free or commercial fishing-free zones
- too much commercial catch and effort in Queensland, either in a particular fishery or generally
- recreational fishing provides greater economic and social benefits, compared to commercial fishing.

There were divergent views within the recreational sector on a couple of issues, including managing key stocks to move towards an unfished biomass target of 60%. One part of this sector supported rebuilding stocks to a higher level and understood that this could mean changes recreational fishing rules, while another part of the sector strongly opposed any changes to current bag and size limits.

## Indigenous sector

The Indigenous sector was supportive of the reform proposals and strongly supported the development of an Indigenous fishing strategy. Common themes raised in the submissions included

- improved engagement between Fisheries Queensland, Indigenous groups and traditional owners
- a greater role for Indigenous rangers in management and compliance
- a more regional approach to fisheries management to foster stewardship at the local level.

## Conservation sector

The conservation sector largely supported all reform proposals. Overall, this sector is seeking an ecosystem-based approach to fisheries management, but expressed the view that the proposed reforms would not achieve this in full. In order to balance biological, social and economic objectives, the sector were of the view that ecological/environmental values supersede all others. Some in the conservation sector expressed concern that the reforms could not be achieved without adequate resourcing of fisheries management.

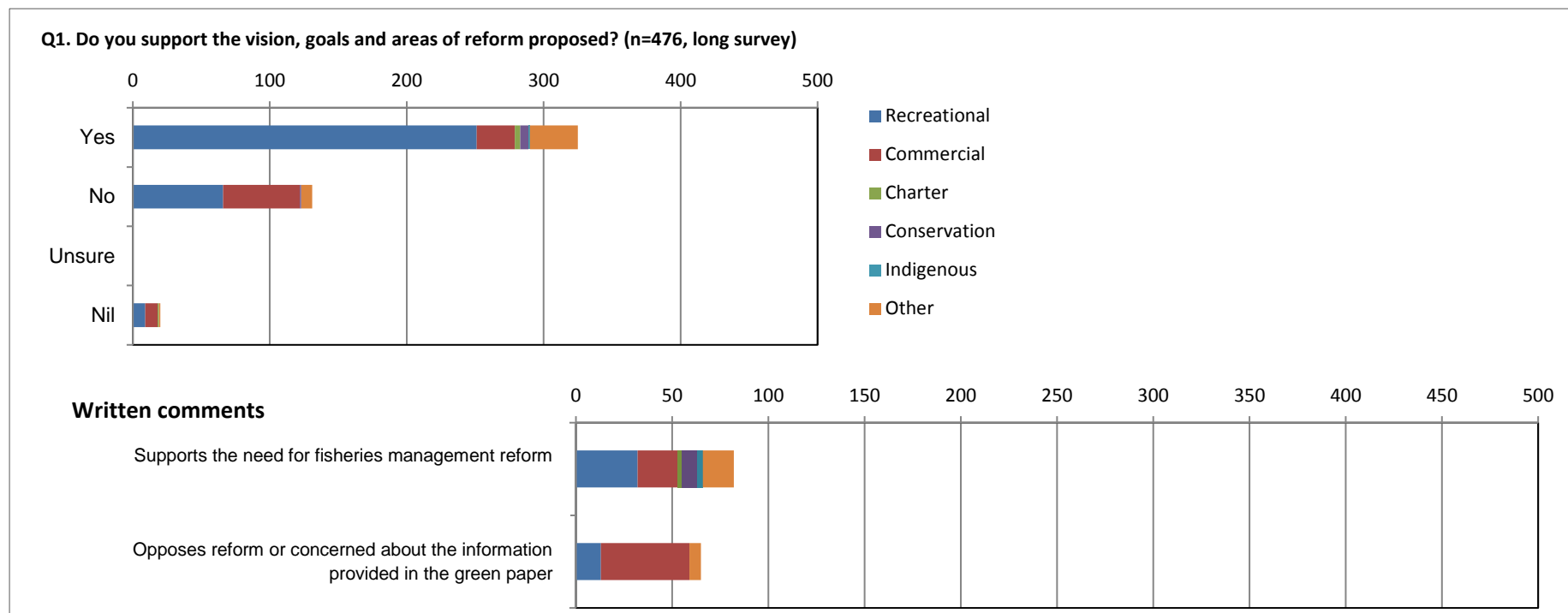


## Feedback and results

Key feedback on each of the green paper's 10 reform areas, as well as the vision, goals and case for reform and priority areas for reform, is detailed in this section. The following results are also provided for each area:

- a graph of the responses to the relevant online survey questions (number of responses, by sector)
- a graph of the categorised written responses from both the online surveys and written submissions (number of responses, by sector).

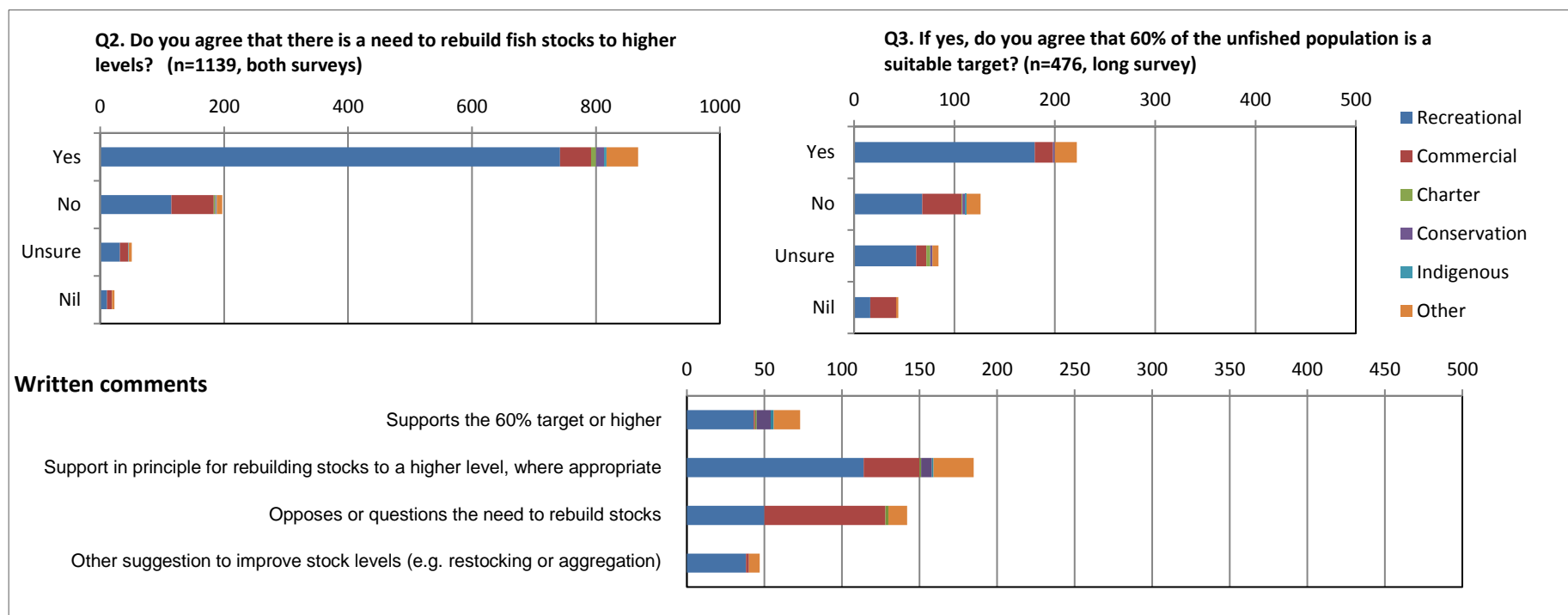
## Vision, goals and case for reform



### Key feedback

- There was support for the vision, goals and areas of reform in the green paper (68% 'yes' responses for survey question 1).
- For those commercial fishers that responded 'no', the comments reflected a view that the green paper was biased against the commercial sector and it did not acknowledge the financial burden of management changes to date. For those recreational fishers that said 'no', common themes in the comments included uncertainty about how it could impact on their fishing experience, concern about how they would have input into future changes and a desire to maintain the current bag and size limits.
- While the need for fisheries reform was supported in principle, many respondents wanted to know the details and what it would mean for their sector.

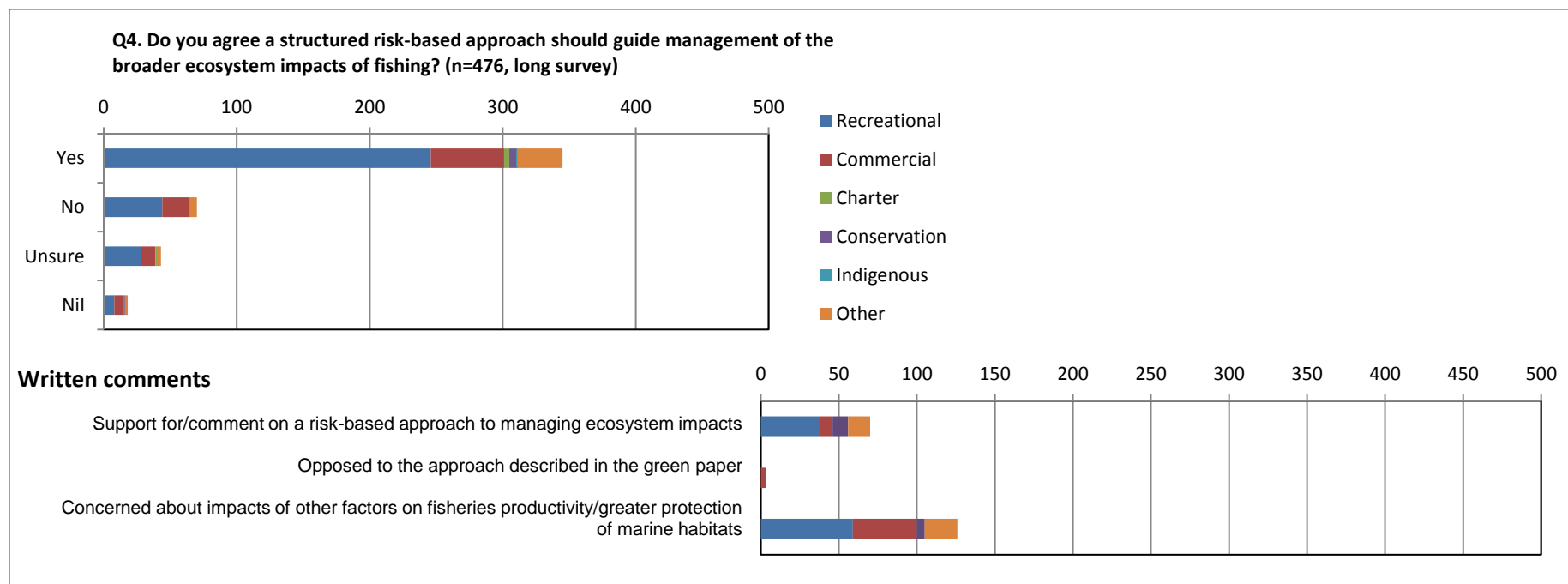
## Managing target stocks



### Key feedback

- The combined results of the quick and long online surveys indicated support in principle for managing key target stocks at higher levels (76% responded 'yes' to survey question 2). However, there was uncertainty about what the target stock size should be and whether 60% was an appropriate target (47% responded 'yes' to survey question 3).
- A number of respondents supported setting biological targets for stocks, but questioned the need to move beyond a maximum sustainable yield target (approximately 40% unfished biomass) and/or considered a 60% target too prescriptive.
- For those respondents who opposed or questioned the proposal to rebuild stocks, the most common feedback was that there was no issue with sustainability of stocks, no scientific basis for higher stock sizes or that targets should explicitly consider the impact of environmental conditions on fisheries productivity.
- Almost 50 responses suggested other options to improve stock levels and/or catchability, including restocking and the use of aggregation devices.
- A common theme was the need for improved data and information from all sectors to manage fish stocks to meet specific targets.

## Managing impacts on non-target species and the ecosystem

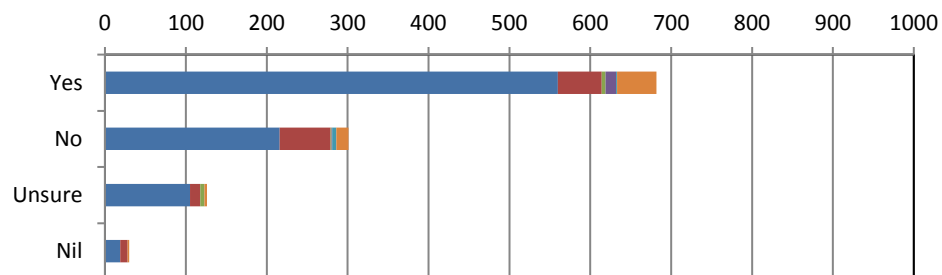


### Key feedback

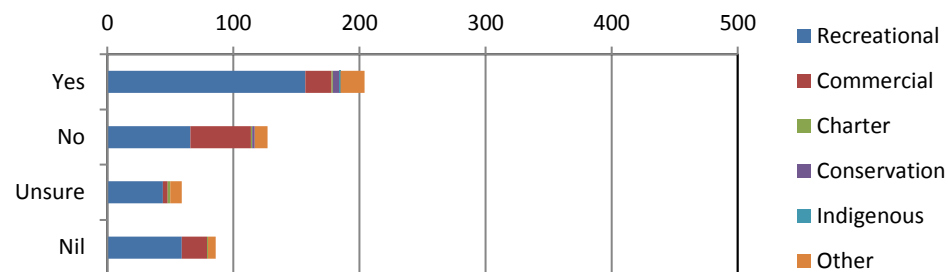
- The online survey results indicated that respondents were largely supportive of having a clear, risk-based approach to manage ecosystem impacts from fishing (over 70% responded 'yes' to survey question 4).
- For those respondents who indicated 'no', very few comments reflected an opposition to the development of an ecological risk assessment policy. Instead, the feedback related to the need to better consider and manage the impacts of other factors (such as coastal development) on fisheries productivity and the marine ecosystem more generally (over 120 responses).
- Over 20 responses expressed specific concerns about the impact of a particular fishing method on a bycatch species.

## Resource sharing between sectors

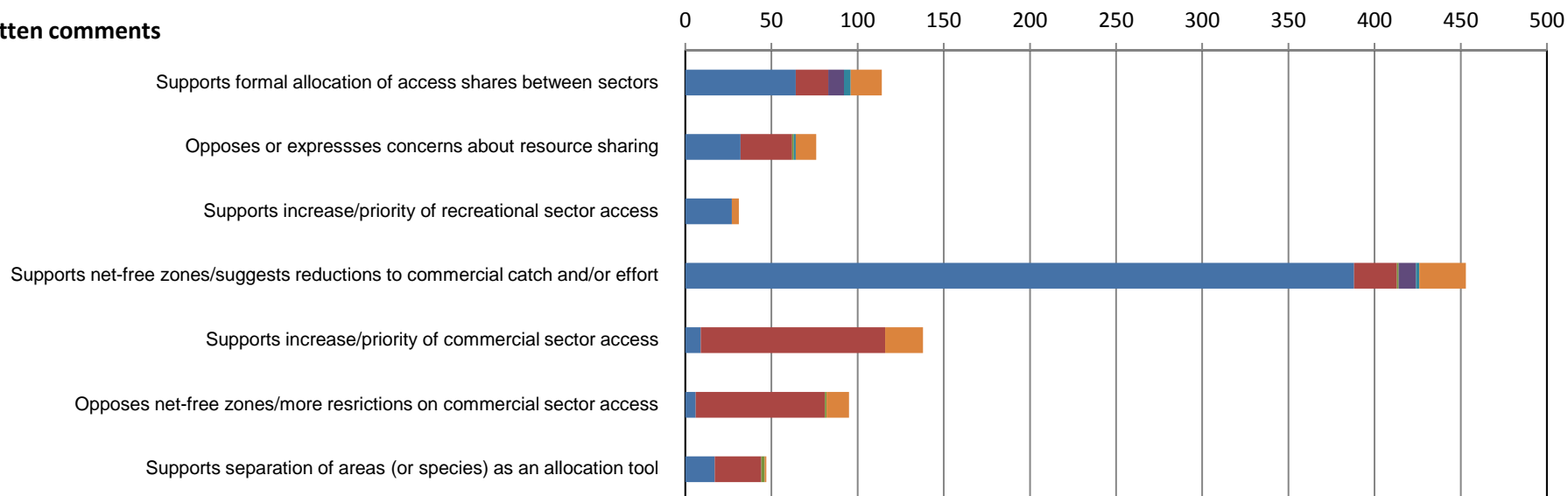
**Q5. Do you support, where appropriate, the allocation of a specific share of the available annual catch to the major catching sectors (Indigenous, recreational and commercial)? (n=1139, both surveys)**



**Q6. If yes, do you agree the allocation of such shares should be guided by considerations outlined in this green paper? (n=476, long survey)**



### Written comments

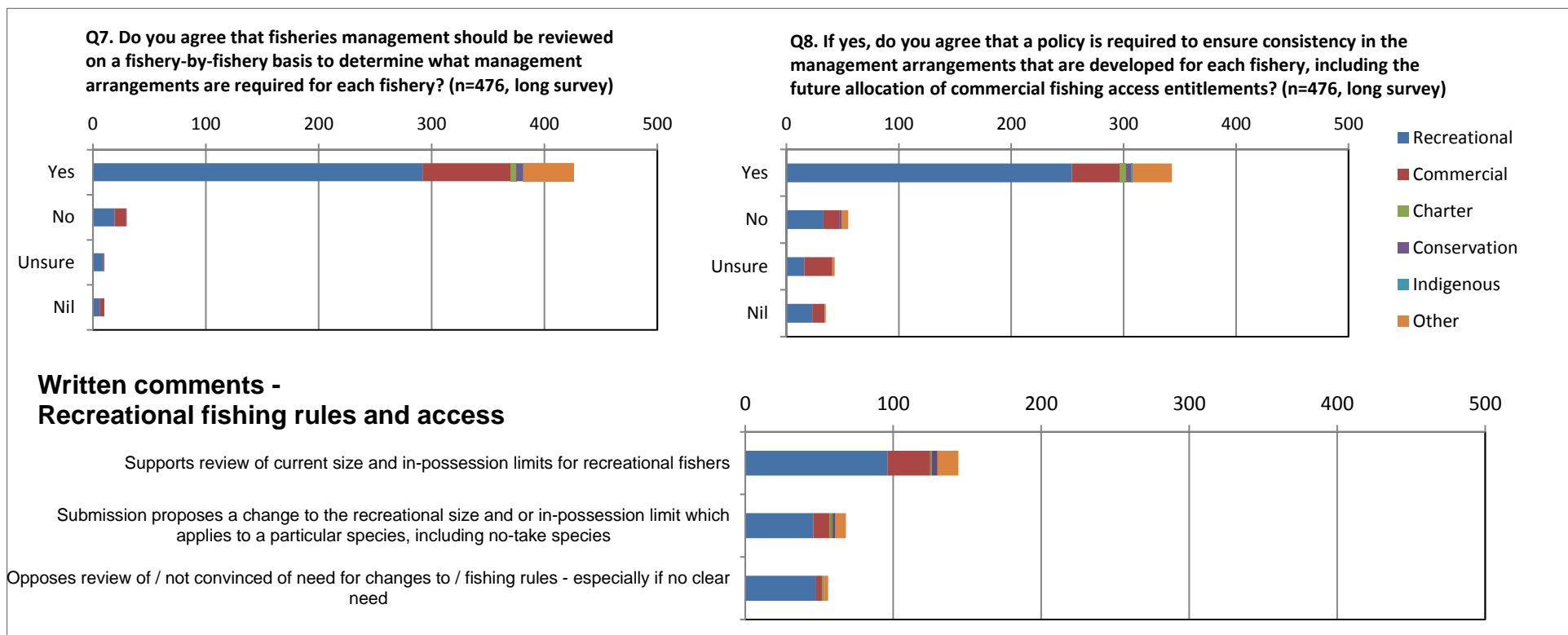


## Key feedback

- There were mixed views about the proposal relating to resource-sharing arrangements between sectors. Although 60% of online survey responses indicated 'yes' to allocating an explicit access share to each sector in principle, there was less clarity about how it should be done and what government should consider when making a decision.
- For those respondents who indicated 'no' to allocating an explicit share of available annual catch, common issues raised included:
  - the need for better catch, effort and economic data from all sectors before decisions are made
  - more clarity around how the shares would be initially allocated and then monitored
  - concern that explicit resource sharing could result in more restrictions for their sector.
- Feedback from the commercial sector reflected a concern that their access would be further reduced and decisions would disadvantage their sector in favour of the recreational fishing sector. There was also concern about the community's ongoing access to fresh local seafood and, more broadly, the perception that seafood consumers were not well represented as a stakeholder group. The commercial sector was opposed to more net-free zones and expressed the view that constant changes were undermining the confidence and security of the sector.
- There was strong support for net-free zones from the recreational sector, either as a concept or in a particular area. A number of recreational fishers were of the view that recreational fishing made the greatest economic and social contribution to the community, and that access shares should reflect this. There was also a view that further reductions in commercial catch and effort are required in either a particular fishery or the commercial sector more generally.
- A number of respondents, mainly from the recreational sector, made the comment that charter fishing operations should be considered as part of the commercial sector, not part of the recreational sector (26 responses).
- Across all responses, there was support for a more transparent and equitable process for sharing access to fisheries resources between sectors, but more discussion is needed around the issue.



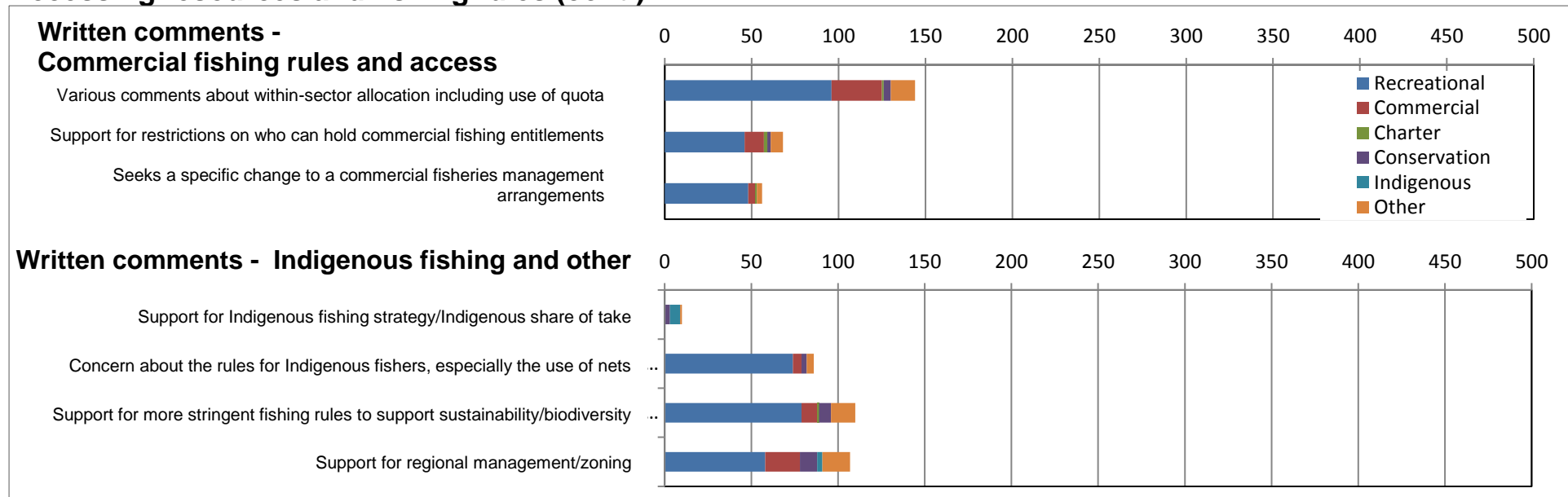
## Accessing resources and fishing rules



### Key feedback

- Based on the online survey results, the majority of respondents agreed that management arrangements should be reviewed on a fishery-by-fishery basis (90% responded 'yes' to survey question 7) and supported developing a policy to guide the future allocation of access entitlements (72% responded 'yes' to survey question 8).
- Almost 150 respondents supported the reform proposal to develop simpler and more responsible bag and size limits for recreational fishers. Comments included the desire to 'catch a feed' and 'not to bag-out'. Other suggestions included using boat limits and a desire to have greater consistency between Queensland and New South Wales rules. A number of respondents also proposed specific bag or size limit changes for a particular species (over 50 responses).
- Those who opposed changes to the current recreational bag and size limits (over 50 responses) were of the view that existing rules were appropriate and socially acceptable. Some would support changes to size limits only if supported by scientific evidence.

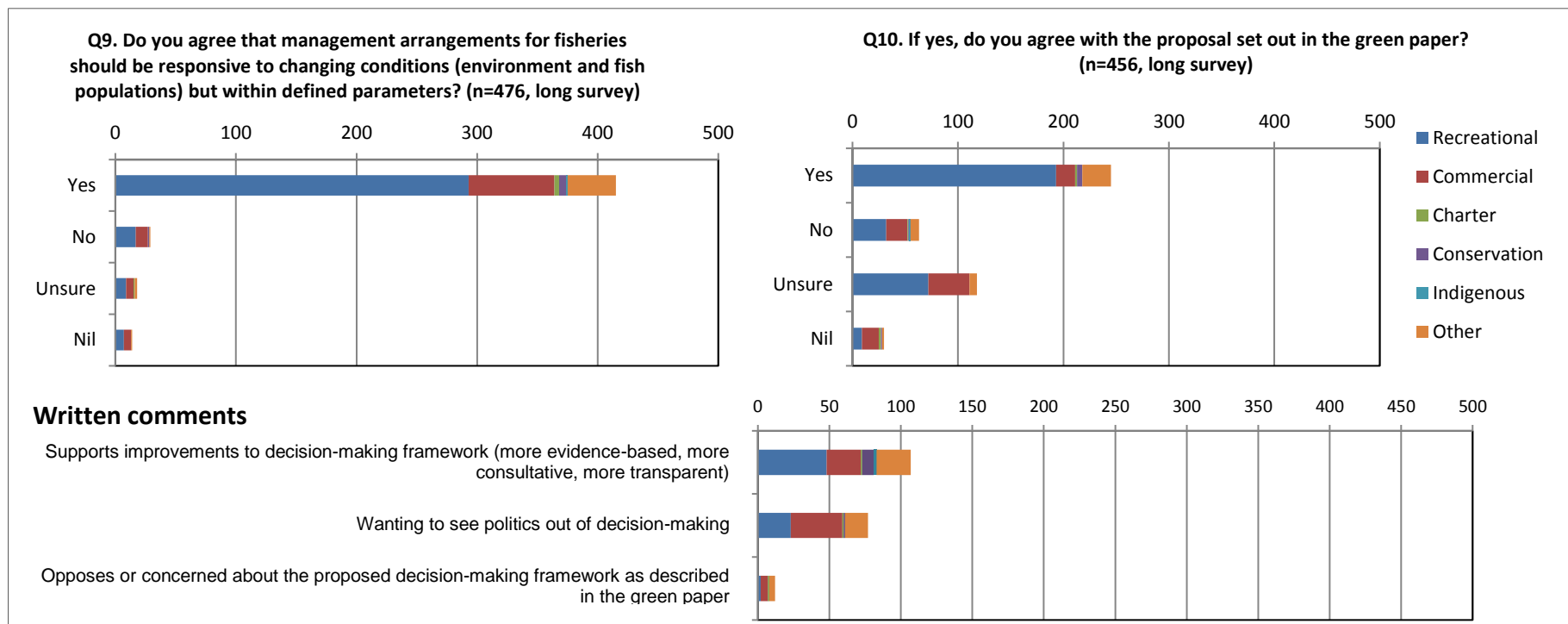
## Accessing resources and fishing rules (cont.)



### Key feedback

- Over 80 specific comments were made on the reform proposal relating to commercial fishing access arrangements. There was some support for the proposal to move to quota if appropriate (28 responses supported use of quota systems, 10 opposed). Concerns about quota systems were around how entitlements would be allocated, that quota systems disadvantage smaller operators and the overall cost-effectiveness of quota systems (in terms of individual profitability). Over 20 respondents provided views on how commercial access could be allocated in the future, such as the use of catch or effort history, equal allocations or a tender process.
- Some respondents provided a view on restricting who can hold and use commercial fishing entitlements (e.g. limiting participation to those who derive the majority of income from fishing or restricting leasing of licences).
- Many respondents wanted the government to consider a regional approach to fisheries management, either in terms of regional quotas or discrete regional management zones (107 responses). Reasons for this included better stewardship of local issues and more efficient compliance and monitoring.
- It was evident that many in the community are not aware of rules and rights around traditional fishing activities. Some expressed the view that Indigenous fishers should be subject to the same restrictions as recreational fishers.
- Indigenous group were supportive of developing an Indigenous fishing strategy.
- Over 100 comments were made about having more stringent fishing rules to ensure stock sustainability. Common responses included prohibiting targeting fish during spawning seasons and closures to protect juveniles or breeding areas.

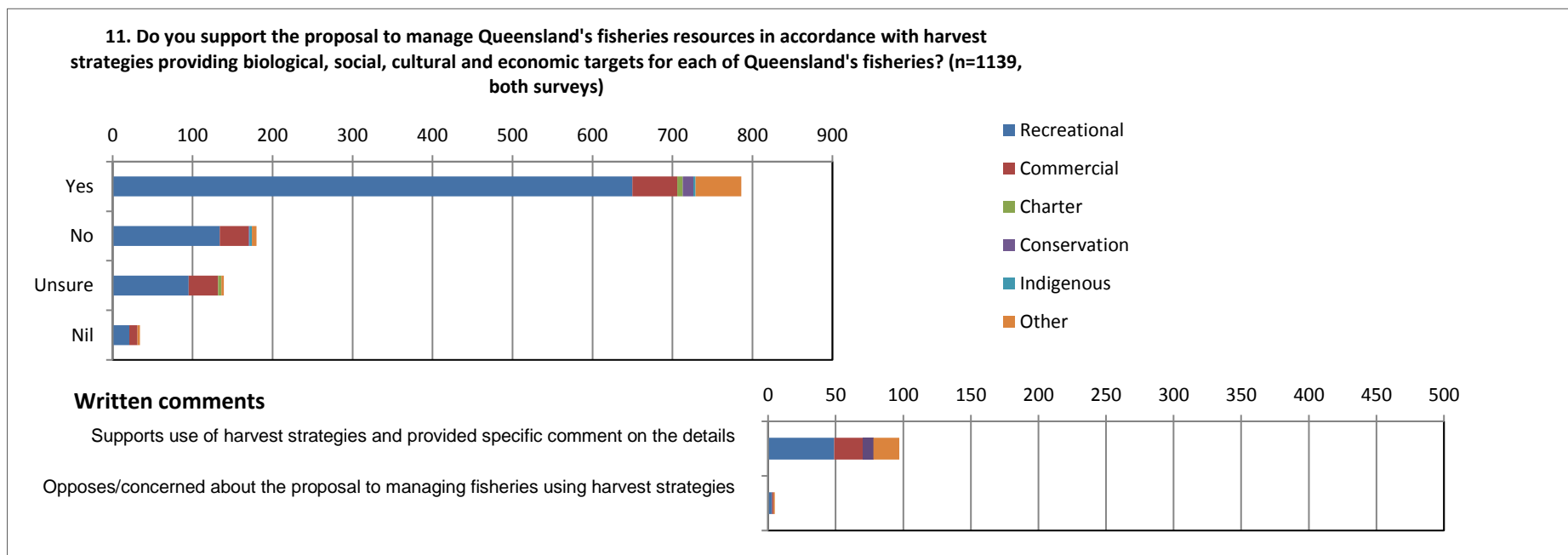
## Decision-making framework



### Key feedback

- The majority of online survey responses supported having more responsive management arrangements (87% responded 'yes' to survey question 9). However, there was some uncertainty around the proposed roles of Parliament, government and the management agency (54% responded 'yes' and 23% responded 'unsure' to survey question 10).
- Much of the written feedback supported having a more transparent and consultative decision-making process, reducing the perceived 'politics' from decision-making and making decisions based on the best available information and science.
- Less than 15 responses explicitly opposed the proposed decision-making framework. Alternative approaches included having an independent body to make fisheries decisions (i.e. not the department and not Parliament), and Parliament always having final say on any fisheries management changes.

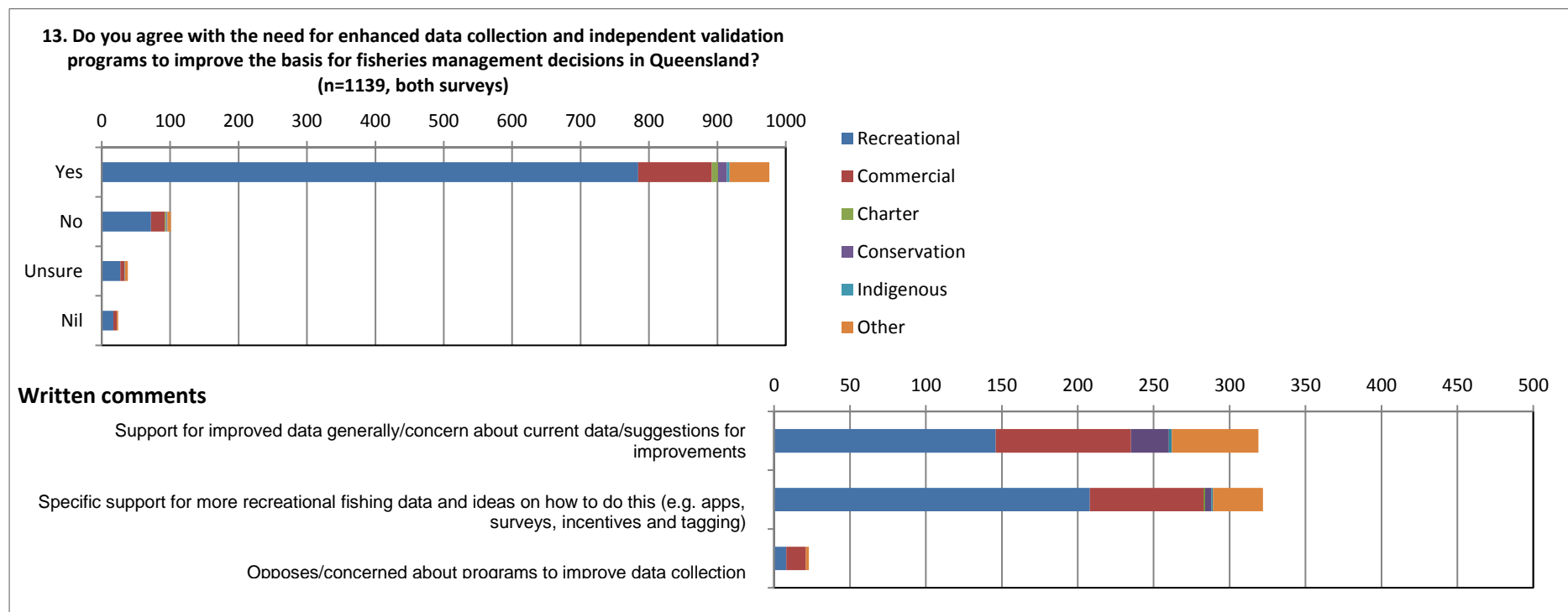
## Harvest strategies



### Key feedback

- There was general support for the proposal to manage fisheries in accordance with harvest strategies (70% responded 'yes' to survey question 11).
- For those respondents who answered either 'no' or 'unsure' to this question, the comments generally related to how biological targets would be set and the current availability of data to underpin a harvest strategy. Very few written comments explicitly opposed the concept of a harvest strategy.

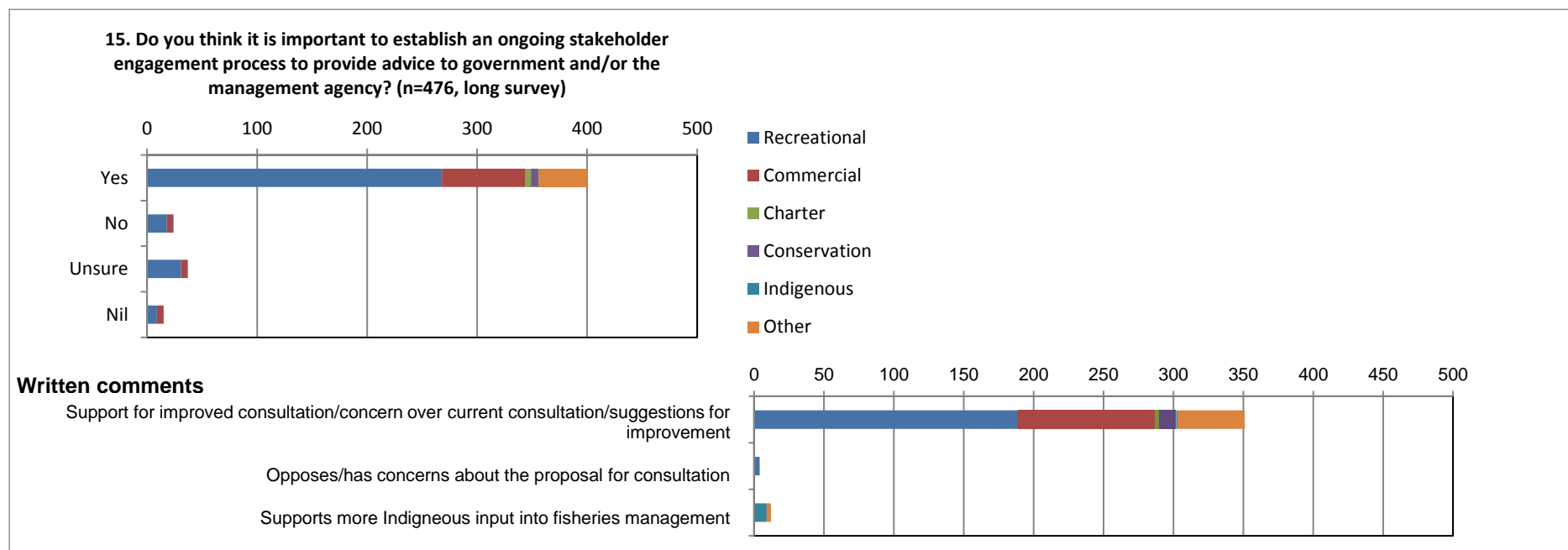
## Data and information



### Key feedback

- There was strong support for better, more timely and validated data across all sectors to underpin fisheries management (86% responded 'yes' to survey question 13). There was a general view that there needs to be a greater investment in monitoring and research programs, as well as greater transparency in reporting.
- Respondents were asked to suggest some low cost ways to collect data, and a large portion of the comments related to the recreational sector (over 300 responses). Ideas included the use of apps or web-based programs for recreational fishers to report catch and effort, support for tagging programs, use of incentives (e.g. reduced fees) and better engagement with fishing clubs in the data collection process.
- Other feedback included moving to electronic logbooks for commercial operators, using independent partners to collect data and undertake assessments (e.g. universities and consultants), and using receipts to validate catch and effort data recorded in logbooks.
- The conservation sector in particular expressed the view that independent scientific observers should be deployed in commercial fisheries to validate catch and effort data, particularly relating to interactions with protected species.
- Opposition to improving data collection generally reflected a concern that data could be used against them (i.e. close areas to fishing) or that there is already enough information collected.

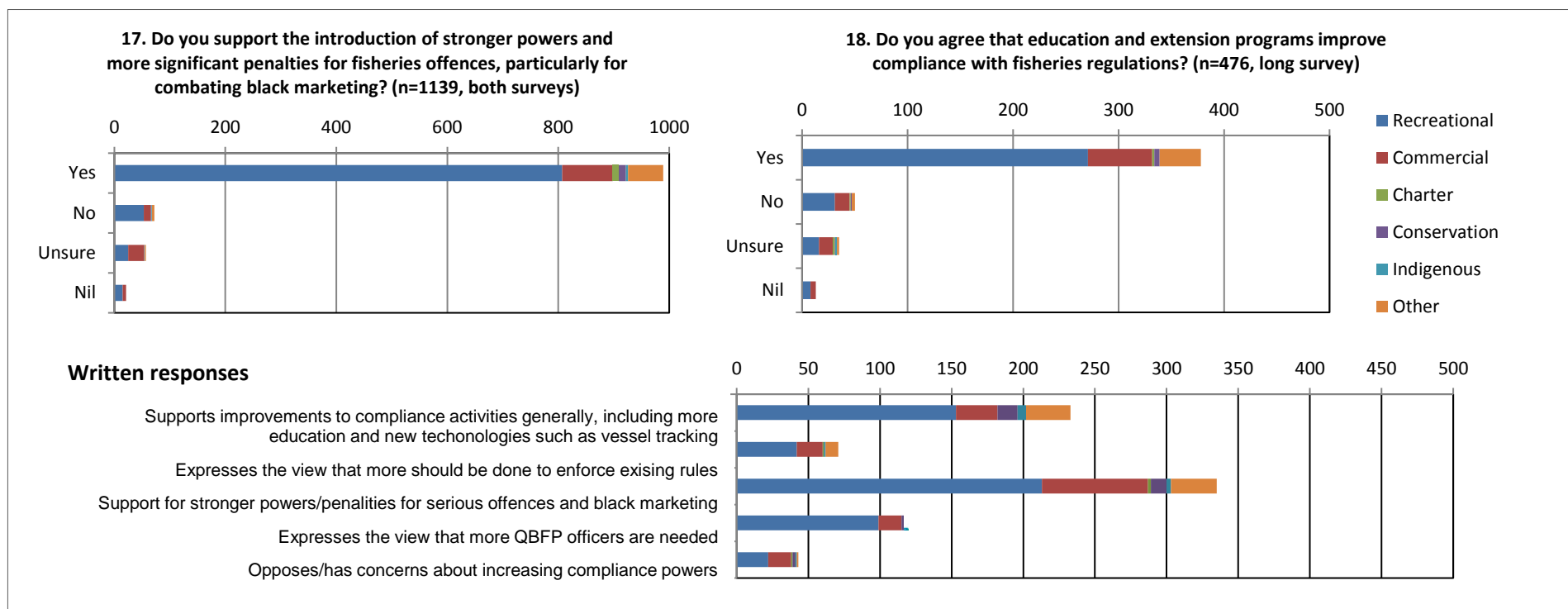
## Consultation and engagement



### Key feedback

- There was strong support for establishing a meaningful and ongoing stakeholder engagement process to provide advice to government and the management agency (84% responded 'yes' to survey question 15). Common themes included transparency, openness and representativeness.
- Stakeholders were asked what they thought were the most important elements of a stakeholder engagement process. Feedback included transparent and appropriate representation of all sectors on any advisory committees, use of independent chairs, regional input and the use of other engagement methods, rather than relying solely on consultative bodies (e.g. social media, surveys and face-to-face port meetings).
- A number of recreational and commercial fishers were concerned that representative bodies did not reflect their view or were not truly representative of the sector. A couple of respondents from the commercial sector questioned the need for 'other' sectors to be involved in commercial fisheries management discussions.
- Indigenous groups were supportive of greater involvement in future consultation and more engagement with government.

## Fisheries compliance



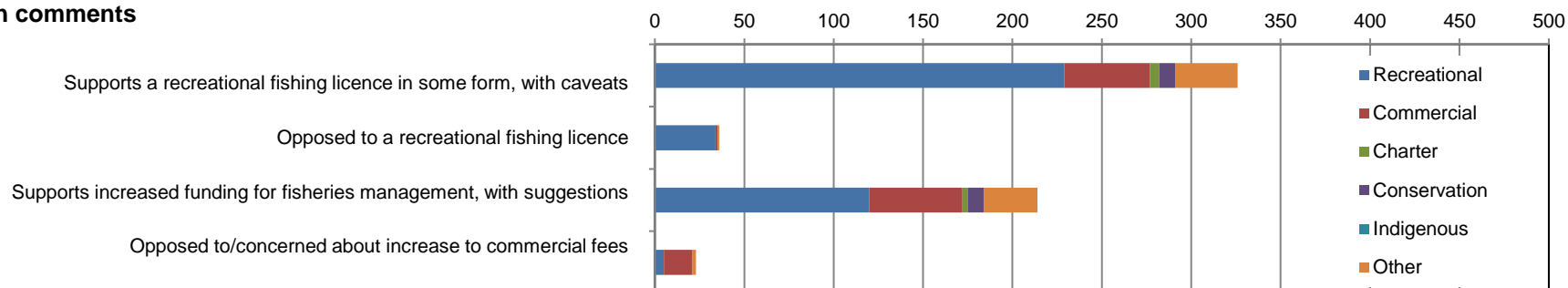
### Key feedback

- The majority of feedback across all sectors supported the proposal to introduce strong powers and more significant penalties for fisheries offences, particularly to address black market sales (87% responded 'yes' to survey question 17). Those respondents who answered 'no' or 'unsure' to this proposal questioned the need to increase powers and/or the prevalence and impact of the black market.
- Feedback generally supported the adoption of new compliance technologies, including vessel tracking. Concerns raised about vessel tracking related to privacy issues, cost to fishers and practicality.
- Respondents generally agreed that education and extension programs improve compliance with regulations (78% responded 'yes' to survey question 18), and many commented that more should be done to educate recreational anglers, especially young people, interstate tourists and migrants.
- Illegal fishing by foreign vessels and the use of Indigenous rangers in compliance activities were also raised in the comments.
- Many respondents expressed the view that more Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol officers are needed to undertake compliance activities.
- Some respondents expressed the view that more could be done to enforce the current suite of management arrangements, including recreational size and in-possession limits (approximately 60 comments).

## Resourcing

Q19. Do you have any views on the best way to resource fisheries management?

### Written comments

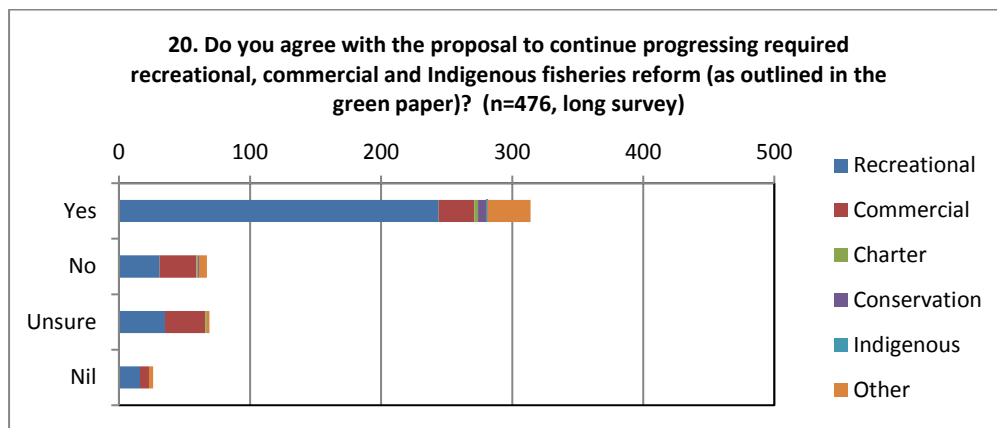


### Key feedback

- The green paper did not make any specific proposals about resourcing fisheries management, but rather asked stakeholders for their views on this issue. Feedback generally acknowledged the appropriateness of the 'user pays' principle in accessing the community's fisheries resources.
- While there was support across all sectors for a recreational fishing licence in some form (over 320 responses), support was generally conditional on how the money was collected and what it could be used for. A number of respondents explicitly opposed a recreational fishing licence in principle, or expressed the view that recreational fishers already contribute via the existing recreational use fee on boat registrations or through taxes. Some were concerned that a licence would stop 'mums and dads from throwing out a line and catching a feed'.
- There was general support for increasing funding for fisheries management activities. Over 200 suggestions were made, including introducing a tax on imported seafood, increasing government expenditure, increasing the existing recreational use fee and increasing commercial fees and/or cost recovery. Some in the commercial sector expressed concern that increased fees would be imposed on the commercial sector without any benefits.



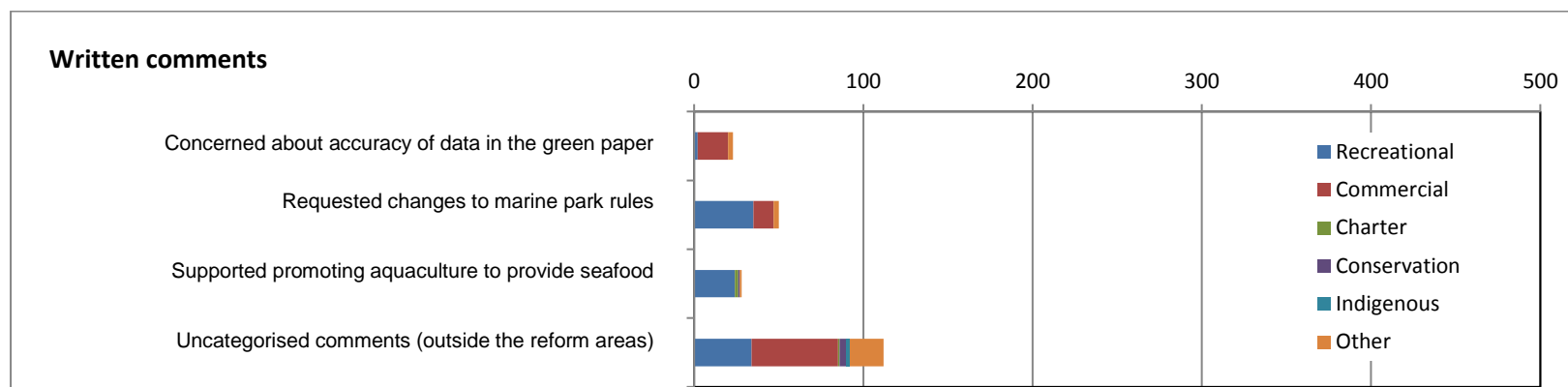
## Priority areas for reform



### Key feedback

- There was support to progress with the priority areas for fisheries management reform as outlined in the green paper (66% responded 'yes' to survey question 20).
- Reasons provided for a 'no' or 'unsure' response included the need to first improve the data and information on which to base decisions. Some respondents indicated that they were concerned about the impacts of reforms on recreational fishers (e.g. ability to catch a fish, reduced bag limits) and commercial operations (e.g. access to resources, profitability).
- Commercial fishers took the opportunity to outline the issues or required changes for the fishery in which they operate, highlighting a need for a fishery-by-fishery approach.

## Other comments



### Key feedback

- A number of respondents from the commercial sector expressed concern about the accuracy of the fishing statistics provided in the green paper ('the snapshot'). In particular, the recreational harvest estimates were considered too low and the economic data presented for both the recreational and commercial sectors were not comparable.
- Almost 50 responses requested changes to marine park rules. The most common feedback was that marine parks should be rotated periodically to provide additional areas with an opportunity to recuperate. Nine respondents provided the view that all commercial netting in conservation park (yellow) zones should be prohibited.
- Stakeholders took the opportunity to raise other issues relating to fisheries management, which fell outside the proposed areas of reform. These included the promotion of aquaculture to produce seafood for consumption, putting restrictions on both the import and export of fish products from Queensland, and improved connections between government departments to support sustainable fisheries management.

## Concluding remarks

A wide range of views were provided from all sectors on the reform proposals in the fisheries green paper. This feedback was taken into account in the development of the Queensland Sustainable Fisheries Strategy released in June 2017, which sets out the government's fisheries reform agenda for the next 10 years.