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MEDIA RELEASE

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ANGLERS TO BENEFIT FROM ARTIFICIAL REEFS OFF NSW COAST

Anglers in **Sydney, Newcastle and the Illawarra** will benefit after the NSW Government approved the deployment of **three offshore artificial reefs**.

Minister for Planning, Tony Kelly, said the **Sydney artificial reef** would be the first deployed around **1.2 kilometres offshore from The Gap and 1.9 kilometres south-east of South Head**.

“Its success will be assessed and monitored for an initial three-year period before two further reefs are deployed, as part of a **\$2 million project** funded through the NSW Recreational Fishing Trust,” the Minister said.

The Newcastle reef is proposed for approximately 3.6 kilometres offshore from Blacksmiths Beach and the entrance to Swansea Channel, and the other south of Wollongong around 2.4 kilometres offshore from Perkins Beach and 2.5 kilometres south of Five Islands Nature Reserve.

The 35 tonne steel structures will take up to six months to build, will be lowered onto the sea floor by a crane and will sit at a depth of around 28 metres to 38 metres with a lifespan of up to 30 years.

Minister for Primary Industries, Steve Whan, said this is the first time purpose built artificial reefs of this scale have been used in Australia.

“The primary objective is to improve offshore recreational fishing opportunities, create new highly productive fish habitats that will provide additional fishing locations,” Mr Whan said.

Mr Kelly said recreational fishing is an important leisure activity for approximately 17% of the NSW population – around one million people – and provides social and economic benefits.

“These artificial reefs will create high quality fishing areas adjacent to heavily populated centres of NSW, supplementing existing natural reefs,” the Minister said.

“Artificial reefs have been deployed in up to 40 countries around the world during the past three decades.

“Since 2005, a number of ‘reef ball’ artificial reefs have already been deployed in NSW coastal estuaries such as Lake Macquarie, Botany Bay, St Georges Basin, Merimbula Lake and Lake Conjola.

“Lake Macquarie has been one of the most successful, with a significant increase in fish abundance and diversity, and extensive marine plant growth on the reef structure.”

A total of **30 conditions** have been imposed on the Industry and Investment NSW project including:

- Development of an education and awareness guideline that includes information on identifying threatened or protected species, handling and releasing them, reporting the sighting, and the potential impact of disposing of litter and fishing gear near the reef;
- While the Department of Planning is satisfied the structures would not impact on whale migration patterns or endangered grey nurse shark population, a detailed monitoring program is required to be developed to look at any impact on threatened species or whales, catch rates, species composition, fish stocks and structural integrity of the artificial reef.