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## 3. Research Methodology

Given the paucity of social information about the charter fishing industry in Queensland, primary data collection through survey research was required to develop basic social, demographic and descriptive profiles of fishing businesses.

### Questionnaire Design

The questionnaires used in this study were based on questionnaires used to assess change in forest resource management in Victoria and Queensland (Fenton, 1998, 1999). Although questionnaires used in previous studies had been designed for self-completion, the questionnaires used in the current study were designed to be completed through telephone interviews. The questionnaire was administered to tourist charter businesses licenced to fish in Queensland. It sought information about the charter fishing business, and social and demographic characteristics of the charter operator and their family.

#### Charter Business Questionnaire

There were approximately fifty questions, in three sections, in the questionnaire. In the first section, charter operators with a fishing license were asked about their business and fishing practices. This included questions on the location of their homeport, years of business operation, number of boats, size of boats, type of fishing activity, seasonal variations in fishing, number of employees, the value and location of sales, and the town locations for business expenditure.

The second section of the questionnaire included questions about the location of resource use and the use of coastal ports when accessing different areas of resource use. When asking questions about the location of resource use interviewers used detailed coastal maps to assist in the identification of areas of resource use, with resource use often being identified in relation to specific reefal areas or in relation to specific towns along the Queensland coast.

In the third section of the questionnaire, all owner-operators were asked for information in relation to their town of residence, years of residence, hours worked in the industry, usual months in which they worked in the fishing industry and the location of towns from which they purchased household goods and services. This section also included questions which provided information about the social and demographic profiles of charter operators and their families, including the age, gender, marital status, housing tenure and educational levels of family members.

Specific and detailed questions relating to the financial characteristics of the charter business were not included in the current survey, because the Queensland Department of Primary Industries had also conducted an economic survey of fishing businesses within Queensland over a comparable time period.

#### Questionnaire Pre-testing

Before conducting interviews, the questionnaires were pre-tested with members of the charter industry. A small number of owner-operators were asked if they could assess the questionnaire in terms of the appropriateness of the questions and the terminology used in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was also reviewed by staff at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

Perhaps the most difficult question required charter-operators to recall the location of their fishing activities over the previous 12 months. This information had to be recorded at a sufficient detail through a telephone interview so that it could be transferred with reasonable accuracy to a 15-minute grid overlay. The pre-test indicated this was possible and that accuracy could be improved by ensuring that all interviewers had detailed coastal maps available to them when asking questions about the location of resource use.

### Survey Sampling and Administration

The objective of the sampling procedures was to obtain a full census of all charter fishing businesses in Queensland as identified in the database. The Queensland Fisheries Service provided a list of 287 names, addresses and telephone numbers of charter operators. Due to the 'dynamic' nature of contact databases, it was not possible to contact all charter-operators because many contact details, including addresses and telephone numbers, were either out of date or incorrect.

During the evenings, weekends and occasionally weekdays of August 1999 to April 2000, trained interviewers contacted operators and made appointments for interviews at convenient times. The response was recorded as either: surveyed, refused, unable to be contacted, or insufficient contact information. Considerable effort was made to locate each charter-operator identified in the database. The questionnaire took approximately 30-45 minutes to complete, depending on the extent to which individual owner-operators wished to discuss specific issues.

Charter-operators were informed of the research prior to being interviewed. All received a letter by mail informing them of the study and inviting them to participate. The research was also advertised in the AMPTO newsletters before commencing the interviews.

## Questionnaire Response Rates

The characteristics of the charter fishing industry make it especially difficult to contact owner-operators, because many may be away for extended periods.

Table 3.1 shows the response rate and characteristics for the survey of charter fishing businesses in Queensland. A total of 199 questionnaires were completed. This represented a response rate of 94.8% of owner-operators who could be contacted. 18.7% of fishers on the database could not be contacted because of incorrect phone numbers, they were away at sea or there was no answer when they were called (Table 3.1).

Of the 287 licence holders, 25 (8.6%) were considered latent licence holders. There was 1 (0.3%) licence holder who was deceased and 22 (7.7%) licence holders who reported they were no longer in business or had retired, as well as the proportion of those that were non contactable and assumed latent (0.6%). For the purpose of further analysis, it was assumed there are 257 active fishing charter licences in Queensland.

Table 3.1. Response Rates: Commercial Fishing Businesses

Response	Frequency	Percent
<b>Completed Questionnaires</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>69.3</b>
Incorrect phone number	29	10.1
No answer to telephone	23	8.0
Deceased	1	0.3
No English	1	0.3
<b>Total Unable to Contact</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>18.7</b>
No longer in business or retired	22	7.7
<b>Total Not in Industry</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7.7</b>
Refusal	12	4.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Response Rate <sup>1</sup>		94.8
Industry Representation <sup>2</sup>		77.3

Note: <sup>1</sup>The response rate is the number of completed questionnaires to the total number of businesses excluding those unable to be contacted or those not in or new to the industry.

<sup>2</sup>Industry representation is the number of completed questionnaires to the total number of businesses excluding those deceased and those no longer in business or retired.

Fenton, D.M. (1999). Forest industry activity and linkages for the West CRA region. Report prepared for the Social Assessment Unit, AFFA, Canberra.

Fenton, D.M. (1998). Resource, Forest Industry and Employee Catchment Analysis for the South East Queensland RFA Region. Report prepared for the Department of Primary Industries and Energy (Canberra).