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Warren (right) accepts the Award from President Jeff

Ron Dempster Award – Warren Steptoe 2004

The Ron Dempster Award is given to an individual for outstanding contribution to the enhancement of recreational fishing in Queensland.

The guidelines are;

- The recipient is nominated by the State Executive
- The recipient does not have to be an ANSA member
- The award does not have to be bestowed annually
- The award is announced during the Annual Conference

Conference

The list of former worthy recipients is growing and its not hard to see the calibre of people we have within the recreational fishing arena

This year the State Executive has nominated a very worthy recipient – Warren Steptoe.

Warren was born in Lismore in 1950 and at a very early age became interested in fishing. He caught his first bass on a lure at the age of 7 and the rest is history.

Events

Its a new year and a new length comp!

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Runs all year to 30th June 2015

Open to all ANSA QLD members

Junior and Senior Categories

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For all that Warren has achieved in an extraordinary lifetime of angling and lobbying, he would quickly shrug off any suggestion that his achievements have been out of the ordinary. In fact, his philosophy is that he only does what every like-minded person has the ability to do, stand up for your rights.

He proudly admits that at the age of 11 he became greatly influenced by the man who became one of our most admired mentors, Vic McCristal.

As fate has it, Warren moved to the Northern Territory in the late 60's only to be wiped out by cyclone "Tracy". The move back to Brisbane was to be the start of a long and colourful period of agitating for the rights of recreational fishers and the sustainability of our fisheries and habitats.

He joined the Brisbane Sportfishing Club in 1980 and soon after became an ANSA delegate in the lobby group of the day, the Qld Amateur Fishing Council. Subsequently this organization became known as the Qld Sport and Recreational Fishing Council and is today known as Sunfish. He served on this committee for around 20 years and championed many projects, often to the disdain of fellow committee members. The problem being that he recognized the potential for a bigger and better fishery beyond the tidal limits of our oceans and rivers. An almost forbidden subject at those early meetings, he was often gagged during debate and the subject closed only to be reopened at the next opportunity.

It was from the interest that Warren displayed in the freshwater fishery, that he was mistakenly identified as a "brown water" fisherman, when in fact he doesn't have a preference – he just likes fishing. The squeaky wheel achieved its purpose and through his efforts with the backing of ANSA, the original AFSAQ (of which he was President) and finally FFSAQ, we are all the richer for his efforts within this fishery. This seems too simplistic an explanation for what has been a long period of heartbreak for Warren and we can only be thankful that his efforts (along with others) have been rewarded with what is now a strong and viable fishery.

This, however, was after the mammoth effort he put in to see that Australian bass were removed from the list of commercially harvested fish species. He was involved to the extent of stopping at roadside fish mongers to "see what was on sale" and photographing "black bream" fillets in shop windows. Similarly, at Council meetings his arguments were often thwarted by the need to move onto more pressing business. The nail was driven in the coffin, however, when he was able to report the taking of 1,200kg of prime spawning bass in one haul of a net in Lake Cootharaba. Finally, a video was produced with the assistance of the Minister of the day, Neil Turner. This footage depicted the bass fishery for what it is, a sport fishery and was released for general viewing in 1987. His goal was achieved and commercial fishermen were given a bag limit of zero.

From his interest in this arena, Warren was appointed to the Freshwater Management Advisory Committee (MAC) – a body he is still a member of. From this he is also a member of a number of sub-committees associated with the MAC and actively participates in the regular workshops.

Another of his “projects” involved his love of the Hervey Bay and Moreton Bay regions and their mackerel fisheries. Apart from being an active participant in the “small mackerel tagging project”, he once again took the stand to put a case for the banning of the ring netting of spotted mackerel. This course took him to a new level in lobbying and as he had done so well in the past, promoted the cause by way of his pen and photography. His efforts were rewarded by disturbing bodily threats and litigation. However, his case was finally proven after 15 years of head banging, by way of the tagging program results, public pressure and finally, a collapse in the fishery from over fishing – ring netting was banned.

Without the need to elaborate further, it is sufficient to say that Warren has also been a major instigator in other projects, such as the Mary River Cod Recovery Program and the Stocked Impoundment Permit (SIP) system – to which he is a current member of the controlling Board.

It would be remiss not to mention his involvement with the Sunfish Angler Education Program. He was a regular instructor at most of the Tallebudgera camps for around 20 years, up until long after his resignation from Sunfish. To this end he achieved from the nationally recognized coaching program, Level 1 coaching accreditation.

Whilst associated with Sunfish, Warren achieved a much-deserved Life Membership for his dedication to tireless efforts to see a fair and equitable fishery for all.

As a club fisherman, Warren was a long serving committee member of the Brisbane Sportfishing Club and was also appointed the distinction of Life Member for his efforts here and beyond.

He also served a term of approximately 4 years with the ANSA State Executive and was a worthy participant on that body.

Warren, through his ability to put words on paper, show it for how it is and then put a “fix it” in place, has endeared himself in the hearts of many fisherman. Unfortunately, many will never know that it happened, how it happened or why it happened. And frankly Warren doesn’t care – so long as it has happened. We are all richer for his efforts and we can only wonder what might have been, if not for “Tracy”!

Could there be a more worthy recipient of the Ron Dempster Award? Warren was one of the main instigators of the Ron Dempster award and it is only fitting that he himself be recognised for the effort he has personally contributed.

On behalf of the executive it gives me great pleasure to present this award to Warren Steptoe.