

This year's recipient has been one of the loudest advocates for recreational fishing in Queensland we've ever heard. And while others have quietly faded away along the way, from when he started writing for fishing magazines back in the 1970's, Dave Donald has never shut up!

At a rough count, in 2025, that's 50 odd years. 50 years later Dave's still in there stirring the pot, waving the flag & making heaps of loud noise about where recreational fishing in Queensland could be and should be!

If you want to get an earful, mention certain recent tunnel netting trials around Bowen to him.

Talk about "Exceptional Contribution to the Future of Recreational Fishing in Queensland." As bad as some aspects of the management of rec fishing in this state certainly are, I hate to think what we'd have if Dave hadn't been taking on bureaucrats & fisheries managers at every level; local, State, & Federal politicians; whole Government departments; and not to leave out a few big bucks developers - for the last 50 years.

Dave was a very early member of ANSA. He was secretary of the Brisbane Sportfishing Club way back in the 1970's if I've got that right. Dave was right in there amongst a few people who were figuring out how to catch tuna in Moreton Bay. He was fly fishing back then. In the 1970's he was on the cover of the old Australian Angler – which became Fishing World with a "permit."

He would have called it an "oyster cracker" back then. But bloody hell; if that in itself doesn't make him a prehistoric pioneer - I don't know what does.

In the 1970's Dave started writing for fishing magazines. And he hasn't stopped!

Somehow he got married & carted his new bride off on an around Australia trip in a short wheel base Landcruiser.

After that they moved to Yeppoon where Dave was a member of the Keppel Bay Sportfishing Club & a fixture at the annual ANSA Qld get together at Yeppoon. That was where I first came across him.

In those days Dave was also a Liaison Officer for the then Qld Amateur Fishing Council. He used to come down to Brisbane for QAFC AGM's & he & Bill Sawynok would camp on my lounge room floor. When a few of us from BSFC made our annual trek to Yeppoon I'd camp at Dave's place at Farnborough.

During this period Dave owned a couple of tackle stores, firstly in Yeppoon, & then Bluefin Sports in North Rockhampton. He set up a fishing charter business while in central Qld, & that morphed into an extended period as a fishing guide in North Qld - and eventually even further north on Cape York.

Dave lived in Weipa for 27 years running a guiding business - Dave Donald Sportfishing. He earned a global reputation along with the nickname "Barra Dave". Meanwhile he's always written & shot photographs for, I think, every fishing magazine & fishing newspaper that ever existed in Australia.

Always, always; Dave's stirred the proverbial pot. In all the years I've known him he's never stopped, stirring & never backed down from advocating for recreational fishing, & for fish & fish habitat conservation.

High level meetings are par for the course. Tourism authorities, senior fisheries managers Government Ministers, they're all grist for the Dave Donald mill.

A couple of years back at a boat ramp I saw him quietly deal with screaming abuse from a Gulf of Carpentaria drift netter incensed by Dave putting into print exactly how the practise has absolutely decimated the Gulf's stock of tuna, mackerel & species we sportfishers treasure like queenfish & various trevallies. I have no idea how he remained calm, well fairly calm.

Sad point here being that this particular commercial fisher was boasting he'd been involved in the fishery for 13 years. Yep; since after drift netting reduced inshore pelagic fish populations in the Gulf to a mere shadow of what I for one can clearly remember from 30, 40 years ago.

Dave recently retired from guiding & moved "back south" to live near Bowen. He fishes for fun these days. I try to take him trout fishing. He's interested but can't get past whingeing "it's too bloody cold!"

And he's still writing for fishing publications. Still stirring the pot. Seems you can't shut him up. Here's hoping he never shuts up. Fishing in Queensland needs people like Dave Donald.

So, Dave the Ron Dempster Award is a small token of our appreciation for what you've done - & continue to do.