



North Queensland Fly Fishers Inc.

Nomination for the ANSA Ron Dempster Award

Nominees: Chris Burgess and Este Darin-Cooper

Date: 01.08.26

It is with great pleasure that the North Queensland Flyfishers Club nominates Chris Burgess and Este Darin-Cooper for the ANSA Ron Dempster Award in recognition of their outstanding commitment, leadership, and dedication through their work on the Inshore Flats Project.

The Inshore Flats Project has been a significant initiative focused on protecting Queensland's valuable inshore fisheries while ensuring that future fisheries management is guided by sound science, transparency, and balanced decision-making. Throughout the project, Chris and Este have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to representing the interests of recreational fishers and ensuring their voices are heard in discussions that will shape the future of these iconic fisheries.

A defining feature of their work has been their advocacy for evidence-based fisheries management. Rather than relying on opinion or assumption, they have championed the collection and application of scientific research to better understand the ecological importance of sensitive inshore flats habitats and the impacts of commercial fishing activities. Their efforts have ensured that proposals for future commercial fishing in these sensitive areas are rigorously assessed against credible scientific evidence, providing a stronger foundation for sustainable and accountable fisheries management.

The impact of Chris and Este's leadership is already evident. Through their advocacy, evidence-based approach, and commitment to public engagement, the proposed 1.6-kilometre tunnel net trials have been paused while the matter is investigated. Their efforts also galvanised widespread community support, culminating in well-attended public meetings and a petition of more than 10,000 signatures calling for the protection of Queensland's inshore flats and opposing the introduction of tunnel nets. This strong community mandate has attracted the attention of both State and Federal Ministers, ensuring that the concerns of recreational fishers and coastal communities are being heard at the highest levels of government.

Chris and Este have also excelled in building productive relationships between recreational fishers, scientists, fisheries managers, Traditional Owners, conservation groups, commercial fishermen, and other stakeholders. Through respectful collaboration and constructive engagement, they have brought together diverse perspectives while maintaining a clear focus on protecting these unique fisheries through informed, science-based management.

The lasting impact of the Inshore Flats Project extends well beyond its immediate outcomes. Through ongoing monitoring, rigorous scrutiny of management decisions, and a commitment to holding decision-makers accountable, the project has promoted greater transparency and integrity in fisheries management. By advocating for best-practice, science-based decision-



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making and ensuring that evidence remains central to policy development, Chris and Este have laid the groundwork for stronger public confidence in the management process and for the long-term protection of Queensland's unique inshore fisheries for future generations.

Chris Burgess and Este Darin-Cooper have given generously of their time, expertise, and energy to advance the interests of recreational fishers while promoting responsible, transparent, and science-based stewardship of our fisheries. Their dedication, integrity, and collaborative leadership embody the spirit of the Ron Dempster Award and make them exceptionally deserving recipients.

The North Queensland Flyfishers Club commends Chris Burgess and Este Darin-Cooper without reservation for this honour.

Kim Macpherson

President, North Queensland Flyfishers Club

