

# LINEBURNER

VOLUME 232 PRICELESS

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**Front Cover:**  
Ethan Scott has been busy bringing food to the family table with his fishing skills



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# A BIG KING TIDE OF CHANGE

BY HEFF

Never in all my time since living in the region since 1996 have I seen such devastation to the area with COVID19 taking a nationwide sweep and decimating us in the process. Only a bare handful of the local population has been able to continue with some normality. I always feared that a severe cyclone could have a similar effect on the area, but even that possibility has no comparison to what we are experiencing now. Hospitality and tourism, which makes up for a huge percentage of revenue for the shire has literally stopped. I don't know of anyone or any local business which has escaped the enormity of the situation. It has been a lot to absorb and extremely distressing.

Being a fishing, marine and lifestyle magazine I can categorically say we are in a deep freeze for an extended time hopefully with the opportunity to be defrosted at the end. I will comment on the state of play within our industry and what the future may hold.

When the full brunt of the nationwide situation came to light I can categorically say the marine industry was literally shut overnight. All fishing charter boats whether it be game, reef or river were imposed with strict regulations forcing closure. It also applied to the likes of the diving and snorkelling sectors. It was literally closing doors and ceasing operation immediately for all and sundry. To walk around the marina with every single boat docked and not with a soul around was eery to say the least.

Once the QLD government and flight companies banned all travel opportunities to the region it was lights out. Consequently the whole sector ceased and I would envisage 99% of people lost their jobs and revenue streams overnight. The marina hub and associated businesses are a massive employer of the shire and a huge chunk of our society was suddenly left

jobless. It has been compared to the pilot strikes back in the 80's which saw the area crumble. Back then tourism was in its infancy but nowadays it is a juggernaut.

From the boats we are associated with at Fishing Port Douglas we have all been forced to seek government assistance like everyone else. We are working and communicating everyday to minimise any business expenses that we normally incur. This has included banks, insurance companies, also the rental aspect of marina berths and much more.

This last point is, as I write up in the air. The Cairns marina being government owned has given 6 months rent free for all their vessels - how lucky are they. Our local marina being privately owned is another beast, which no resolution has been announced. Many are dubious that any relief will be offered and early in the piece some of the bigger operators removed their vessels and put them up the local Dickson Inlet, much like when we have a cyclone evacuation. This rental relief is absolute key as to whether we have a marine industry to come back to considering so much has been achieved to make it undeniably a world class set up.

With our climate turned upside down, at Fishing Port Douglas and our affiliated boats we communicate everyday and offer support to each other. We have every intention of being ready to bounce back immediately whenever that may be. That's all we can hope for and wish everyone in the area the same sentiments. ■



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# EXCEED SPORTFISHING

BY JAKE WYATT



By the second week of March all our charter work came to a complete standstill. Till that point we were kept quite busy and were looking forward to a blockbuster Easter period with very solid bookings. We all know now that never happened and that the whole country and local region has been tipped upside down. It was a pity because the weather for the school holiday period was nothing short of being brilliant this year. What could have been! All we can hope for is that this whole crazy pandemic moves along as fast as it came and we can all get on with our jobs and lives.

During these very quiet times there's always something to do when it comes to boats. Trailer maintenance is a must if you don't want your wheels falling off and causing some serious damage. Exceed's running gear on the trailer is all Stainless Steel. This includes hubs, break calipers, bearing buddies and break pads. By using stainless running gear this eliminates corrosion from salt water which in turn means all the gear will last a lot longer than normal galvanised steel.

Good news, we just recently checked our bearings after a solid 12 months and they were as new as the day we put them in, as they should be. So keep up to date with all your trailer maintenance and you will have trouble free towing for many years.

It's also been a good time to pull the inside of the boat apart, do some minor repairs plus check all required survey gear such as life jackets, first aid kit, extinguishers,

navigational lights and so on. Maintenance of all fishing reels and checking over tackle boxes has all been part of the process. Servicing and also regular running of the engines is important to ensure things don't seize up whilst we are not doing charter work. Finally a detailed polish of the hull has kept me busy enough for the meantime. I must say the boat has never looked in better condition.

We have been busy behind the scenes at the moment and working on a lot of plans for when this social distancing finally finishes. We have had a new major sponsor jump onboard, Mako sunglasses which supply us with absolutely quality gear. I have been wearing Mako's everyday for the last few years and can not fault them, they are amazing. The local tackle store in Port Douglas, Nautical Marine Sales stocks the whole range of sunnies so if your after a new pair, I would highly recommend them.

Also all new fishing gear from the lads at Pure Fishing has also recently arrived on our doorstep which we have been testing by ourselves and just loving what they have sent us. With current weather it was an ideal time to hit some hot spots and the gear stood up easily to big large mouth nannygai and variety of other hard fighting fish.

All we can do for now is to keep our heads down, come up with cracking deals for when this passes and pray that we actually may end up with some holiday makers towards the end of the year, hopefully.

Stay safe Port Douglas



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# DRAGON'S DEN

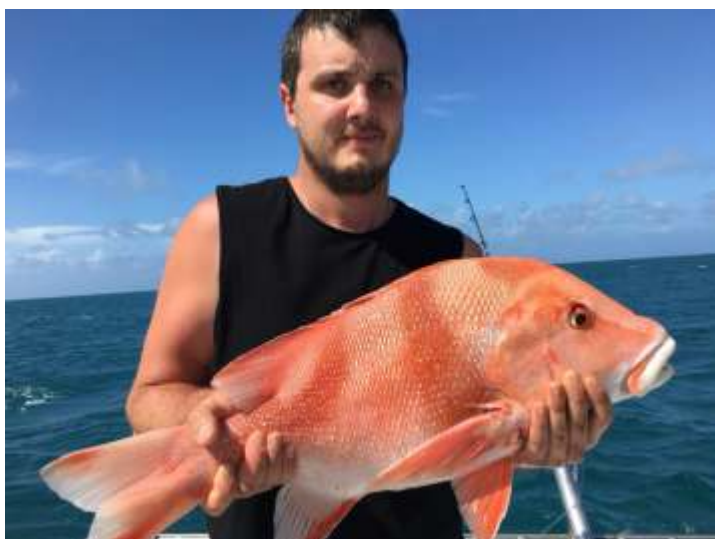
BY STEVE ADAMSON

We began the March period like any other before, a few charters here and there expecting the coming weeks to be a naturally quiet period. By mid month that was a reality and much more. It happened so quickly and the COVID 19 had swallowed up our operation in one quick bite. We initially thought we maybe able to offer restricted numbers on our trips but as these tightened it was absolutely unviable to keep our doors open. The fact that literally no one was able to travel here was the final nail in the coffin. Following a very soft start to the year, we were like any other operator or business in the town, banking on a solid Easter trade which was on the cards according to all sources. Well that idea flew out the door in a heart beat and the remainder of the year as well to this point.

All my life I've been able to sustain a living no matter the hardships or challenges - this complete shut down for God knows how long is a real tipping point. If our initial plans, government assistance and in house negotiations pan out I'm hopeful the Dragon Lady business will come out the other side of this very dark period. I know I'm not isolated from this and our local marine industry is at a complete crossroads like we've never seen before.

I must say all my team have been very supportive and understanding of the predicament we all face together. We are all out of work indefinitely and remain hopeful for the future. Communication is key in the current circumstances. To make light of the situation in the coming weeks we'll as a team utilise the boat to go out and catch some fish to assist putting food on our tables. I'm typically not a big fish eater which may come as a surprise, but I can see myself becoming more of what they say is a 'pescatorian', similar to a vegetarian. I'll be happy to swap a fish or two for a bag of rice if anyone is interested.

Moving forward it is no surprise that we, as a business are in absolute damage mode exploring every avenue to hopefully stay afloat for a future restart. That is probably the worst aspect because no one knows when they may even be a possibility. From the onset the Federal government has shown good initiative but now the State really needs to step up to the plate to ensure we



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have a tourist industry to return to which QLD is ultimately reliable on. What they all promise and actually deliver on we'll have to wait and see. For us as a charter boat, rent relief on our berth will be key as to whether we can survive this storm having to deal with a private marina with a foreign interest.

Let's get back to a bit of fishing, as I can gather there will be many of you with plenty of time on your hands moving forward. With the handful of charters we got in before the shut down, the fishing was quite okay. It is quite obvious that hot, steamy summer is over and changing by the day. We are seeing the south easterly winds return which will soon see a shift in ocean current with cooler waters coming from the south. If I look over my recordings throughout the many years the next month or so can explode with activity and significant numbers of fish caught. Just within the early stages of March I explored a couple of areas which I know will only get better and we got some surprising results. It is not often that you'll see legal red emperor as your main species for the day as just one example. Typically nomadic schools of fish such as the emperor and nannygai will move location according to the currents. These fish will start to spike if you know where to go. Coral trout and other species will still bite consistently in the haunts you've been fishing for over the last few months. My tip I guess is, think southern currents and shift accordingly. Normally we also start to see some better mackerel movement back into the area and I can say the cobia are still continuing really good form.

Hopefully we'll be back next month to continue further reports and take care everyone in these unprecedented times - a popular term used in every day conversation nowadays. ■

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*LET'S MEET*



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# AWESOME COMPETITION CONTINUES

BY HEFF



The monthly Gunnell Rod Australia competition worth \$4500 rolls on. Pictured is Ethan Scott who sent through a fantastic story fishing off Four Mile Beach last edition and a very worthy winner of this \$400 prize. This month the landscape moves a little further north to Wonga Beach with an entertaining piece put together by Alison James who has been announced as the April winner. Hope you enjoy.



# WOW AN UNEXPECTED PRIZED FISH

BY ALISON JAMES

Having not managed to get the boat out for a while due to weather, work and other commitments, Paul asked me if I fancied going up the river for a couple of hours. As the boat was all ready to go I jumped at the chance.

We put the boat in at Newell Beach boat ramp and as the water looked so calm and inviting, we decided to go out the front and fish the coastal reef instead of the river. This was much more appealing because the mozzies and other bites seem to gravitate to me in the confines of the mangroves.

We headed out both enjoying being back on the water. We'd packed light – no big esky, just a cool bag with some pilchards and a bag of old bait which had been in the freezer for too long and we would use as berley.

We found a nice little spot and fired up the Minkota electric motor to anchor us into position. After about half an hour with not even so much as a nibble we realised that we had been drifting. Unfortunately, the battery had gone flat on the Minkota.

As nothing was happening in our spot we decided to trawl for a while. I was restricted on time and we had to be back just after lunch time. Paul put a couple of lines out the back of the boat and I drove us around for a time.

As we were trawling we noticed a good school of fish on the bottom according to the

sounder and decided to anchor up and try our hand at bottom bashing.

Me with my one rod and Paul with his two pulled up several 50cm reef sharks and were having great fun tussling with there feisty critters.

Paul's bigger rod got bitten off and he was



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re-tackling it. He still had his light spin rod out which had 10lb braid and 40lb mono leader, with no sinker and a drifting cube of pilchard on a 6/0 circle hook. Suddenly it went off.

The rod bent right back and started peeling off line. Thinking it was another shark he said to me "can you get that"? I put my rod down and grabbed his out of the holder also expecting to pull up another shark. This one was putting up quite a fight and I expected it to be a lot bigger than the others.

After about 5 minutes of fighting I said to Paul, "can you take the rod, my arms are done in"? However, Paul, with a slightly smug look on his face, told me to carry on as I was almost done. He suspected I had my first GT on the hook as it kept fighting and fighting.

When I eventually got it to the surface we saw some colour and we both realised it was something pretty special – my first ever Fingermark - Oh my God! With Paul's help I got the beauty into the boat and was overcome with excitement. Having only been fishing for two years I was ecstatic with the catch. A prized 78cm Fingermark, what a fish! I'll never forget this moment.

We went home two very happy people having had a great morning doing something we both really love. ■



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**Generally don't exceed 70cm**

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**distinguished**

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## GBRMPA Reef Update

The Authority acknowledges the extreme impact that COVID-19 is having on tourism businesses and their communities and we are doing everything we can to support the industry in these difficult times. When it is safe to do so, the Authority will encourage people from across Australia and around the world to see the Reef, love the Reef, and importantly protect the Reef.

As of 31 March 2020, sea surface temperatures (SSTs) across the Great Barrier Reef were near average and well below the temperatures that caused mass coral bleaching this summer.

Although temperatures decreased, the effects of prolonged thermal stress are still being observed across the Marine Park and it will take time for bleached corals to recover and regain their colour and health.

Reef-wide aerial surveys to determine the

extent and severity of coral bleaching across the Reef concluded on Friday 27 March 2020.

Some initial observations from the aerial surveys:

- Widespread moderate to severe bleaching across much of the Reef. Areas, mostly well offshore, had no or low level bleaching.

- Some areas have reefs with a mix of negligible, moderate and severe bleaching (the southern offshore reefs of the Marine Park)

- There are reefs that severely bleached for the first time in 2020.

- However major tourism areas of the Reef mostly experienced no, negligible or moderate bleaching only - the exception is one area in the southern part of the Marine Park with severe bleaching.



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# EXTREME FISHING, COVID STYLE - SELF ISOLATION

BY JIMMY ASTILL



With all that's happening in the world today and social distancing being one of the key answers to helping slow and prevent the spread of Covid-19, I decided I'd try fishing in a way unheard of. A way that was different, something so extreme it was unheard of .... again!

I call it 'Scuba Fishing' ! I was trying to think of a spot where I would see no other fisherman, a place where I could ponder on life and think of all that I needed without the interruptions from technology and modern day weather patterns. A place where no spanners were going to get thrown into the mix of this crazy world at the moment .... Anyway, I think you get my point.


The idea came to me after 5 and a half frosty black marlins (the symbol of really cold Great Northern Beers). Some of the world's best ideas derive from a couple of coldies. I thought to myself you bloody beauty Jimmy, that's a brilliant plan. Tomorrow I'll borrow some of my mate Tom's Scuba gear, take a camping chair and my jungle perch rod and sit on the bottom of a pristine local rainforest creek and have a fish. This would have to be

great experience. Also I was going to do my bit for my country. It ticked all the boxes.

The following day I chose my secret spot, a stunning piece of water that would have looked the same a thousand years ago. From the car I hiked for about 200m with heavy scuba gear, a camping chair, fishing gear, a bucket and some dive weights. It was a solid workout to say the least.

It was a bit of organising on the water's edge but I soon found myself all set up sitting on my BCF camping chair, 3 metres at the bottom of the fast flowing creek. Immediately I felt a sense of peace, it was surreal. I had my small perch rod set up with a little bit of bait (a small piece of spangled emperor fillet) and I kicked into relax mode sucking on my oxygen supply.

Only minutes later, every now and then fish would come into view through the murkiness that was 2 metres around me. They would see me, dart around and disappear. But then they'd come back periodically for another look. I wonder what was going through the small head's of theirs. 'Crikey, never seen that dude

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before', I'd imagine!

After a little while I decided to look upwards and amazingly it was crystal clear looking up to the surface where the sunlight hit the water. It was incredibly beautiful to say the least. The rays of sun transformed this into the best ever aquarium. At that moment I had jungle perch, rainbow fish and a small mangrove jack swimming above my head.

I tried to think who may have done this before. Names that sprang to mind included Edison, Da Vinci or maybe Newton in years gone by? For a moment I was in esteemed company, well done Jimmy! It was a good question cos' I couldn't think or even heard of anyone doing this style of rainforest fishing in FNQ. However, in the same thought process I said to myself maybe 'flip', yeah Jimmy, 'Flip' yeah! You'd be surprised what pops into your head in a unique scenario like this.

The aquatic life by now were all around me, including swimming above the rod line and bait too. Some fish would approach the bait but I never got a bite as they say. It didn't bother me at all as I was completely fascinated just looking at them. As I sat and read the latest edition of the Line Burner mind you, we all soon moulded into the same environment. The fish got use to me and the same in return. Aquatic Ying and Yang, I would say! It was truly an awesome experience and over the period of one hour I saw a number of freshwater species. Jungle perch, mangrove jack, large rainbow fish,

eel tail catfish, eels, saw shell turtles, pacific blue eyes and prawns. There was also a species of which I'm unsure, it was stripey and yellowish, some sort of grunter I gathered. I also remember thinking during this time underwater in a rainforest stream - How good is our home, Far North Queensland! Seriously if the oxygen in the tank lasted longer I would have sat there all day...

I did video this whole experience from leaving the car and you can see it on my Facebook page - Jimmy Astill. It has received enormous response, massive in fact and is quite humorous. Check it out!

Also more recently I've been practising spear fishing in our pool at home to kill the time and it is still in line with a self isolating activity. Thank you Mr Prime Minister, pat on my back, well done again Jimmy! It was also another 'Marlin Can' idea I must admit.

In a nutshell, I'm now in the process of setting up an elaborate pulley system above the water where template models of fish will drop into the pool and you have to decide which species to pull the trigger on in quick time. It's a skills test of sorts. I'm still modifying this and will report on my progress next month - COVID Style! I think there maybe a very popular tune / song such as Gangnam Style already running through your heads ....

In the meantime, much obliged, stay safe everyone and keep helping each other out. Cheers TOTC #JimmyAstill ■



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## On the Daintree

By Jamie Beitzel

I'm sure I'm not the only fishing operator in the area which has succumbed to the COVID 19 virus which has brought the tourist industry to a stand still in FNQ or anywhere for that matter. At a time when I'm kept busy over the Easter period I find myself attending to our property and doing things with the family. With repeat clients unable to get up here and with surrounding caravan parks and accommodations virtually shut down it is a very strange time which looks like it will remain the same for most of the year.

It is a real pity because the Daintree River and coast was, and will continue to fish really well at this time of the year. Leading up to the last of my charters before the shutdown kicked in, I was kicking some butt with my clients. In the river my golden trevally catches were some of the best in recent years along with some brilliant queenfish angling. The queenfish were also quite thick along the coast as well. When we talk about Daintree queenfish, I'm talking about the good ones, up to and exceeding the 1m mark. Conditions were ideal for them this time around and bait supply was healthy in the area. These bigger talang variety are a whole heap of fun providing some serious pulling power but also value adding with really exciting surface action leaping and cartwheeling out of the water. They also make for a great

photo opportunity being a striking looking fish.

Going back to the golden trevally these were prolific in the lower sections of the river and as mentioned were of high quality. On lighter spinning gear they too put on a true performance giving the angler surging runs one after the other. Other fish which featured regularly included some really good javelin fish and we also caught barra when we specifically targeted them.

Talking of targeting barra, I have mentioned spending more time with the family and this included Fletcher, my younger fellow who also love his time on the water. Just very recently we went for a fish late afternoon and into the evening and got ourselves a couple of solid barra in the high 60's and were perfect to take home for the family. With the days still reasonably warm and the water temperature at a premium I'd expect the barra to fish well for the next month.


With a bit more time on my hands it has also been a period to look at improving the business for the future. With Heff at Fishing Port Douglas we are establishing a wonderful new website and looking closely at how we can be most effective when the doors to tourism re-open.

In an uncertain time, we up here on the Daintree wish everyone the best in the coming months. ■



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## Reel Cooking with Mick Hart Baja Mackerel



With what we cook and keep stored in our fridges, mackerel is undoubtedly probably one of the best valued fish to catch. For example the return on a mackerel, minus the head and frame is close to 75% body weight of fillet. A 6-7kg mackerel can easily turn into more than a dozen individual meals. The bigger the fish the more you can store say in the freezer for future meals.

The recipe below, if you cook more than suggested will have a longer shelf life for left overs to stay in the fridge to eat whenever it suits.

### Ingredients

4 slices of Spanish Mackerel  
1tsp cumin  
1tsp Mexican chilli powder  
1tsp paprika  
1 lime juices  
1tsp Salt @ pepper  
1 tbsp of olive oil

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### Method

Mix all ingredients together and coat fillets well, let to marinate for only 5min.

Pan fry or bake fish in the oven for about 10 min.

Serve with guacamole, fresh coriander and lime wedges.

## Important Notice

Hi Everyone,

With a changing world day by day firstly we hope everyone is well and staying healthy.

STRAIGHT UP FRONT – THE LINE BURNER IS GOING TO CONTINUE DURING THIS TOUGH PERIOD – 22yrs Now and by far FNQ's longest standing fishing magazine !!

With difficulty getting the magazine printed due to circumstances out of our control, we are shifting our attention to our already in place, digital download ability available to all. We have been doing this for 4yrs now with ours and your representation numbers on the internet exceeding the hard copies we issue each month. In the last year the Line Burner has been downloaded via [www.fishingportdouglas.com.au](http://www.fishingportdouglas.com.au) and our facebook feeds on a median level of 1800 per month. We are now looking at increasing this level considerably more in the current circumstances with our IT team. If you haven't downloaded a copy go to our website and have a look. Seriously it is dead simple, takes moments and is literally like having a hard copy in your hand.

Our content will not change with our team of valued contributors and advertisers committing to moving forward which is simply fantastic. In fact you will see some new faces appear over the coming months.

With behavioural change inevitable and more time on people's hands, this format of the magazine we predict will go to a new level still ensuring the continuation of this magazine. If anyone has any concerns let us know or even better call me on 0409610869.

Take Care & Good Will  
Regards Heff  
Editor Line Burner

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# FISHING WITH A TWIST

BY ETHAN 'CHOPPA' SCOTT



As a 13yr old it did take a bit of time to fully register what was going on in the world and also around town in Port Douglas. School was closed down early (and not clear when it will return), I couldn't hang out with my mates as normal, Mum & Dad were at home more often than not and even going fishing had its issues. Life was not even close to being normal.

Being on extended school holidays has had its challenges but as a family, including my two sisters, we have survived so far. Luckily I have been able to get my regular fishing fix and with strict rules set in place by Dad, I've been getting amongst the fish. Like any other person I have had to obey by the rules given to everyone, something which took time to adjust.

Besides obvious safety rules, I have only been able to fish with one mate at a time. In recent weeks my bud Jetson and I have been doing something a bit different to normal. With permission by the property owners we have been fishing a fresh water stream up in the highlands of Julatten, over the range between Port Douglas & Mossman. With one of our parents dropping us off at Point A we have fished anywhere from up to 2km to 5km of pristine waters. At an agreed time the other family parent would pick us up at Point B a few hours later.

It is not a big body of water, mostly very narrow most of the way about 1m in depth. At times there was not a lot of fishing and a lot of walking in between wetting a line. Every so often on a bend in the system the water would flow into a deep hole. I'm not sure how deep but the water was dark meaning it was pretty deep. These holes often had a sandy beach section where we would fish from but



we did have company. Cattle and horses gathered here from the surrounding paddocks to drink water. They didn't seem bothered by our presence and it was a different fishing experience.

The surrounding country side we walked through was mainly rolling, green pastures and also sugar cane fields. The creek itself was lined with luscious, healthy big trees. The temperature was much cooler than on the coast and it made for comfortable hiking. As we walked in between spots we saw numerous green tree snakes and several big lace monitor lizards clinging onto the side of the trees. It was awesome to explore somewhere different and to target other species.

With very light spin gear we fished with mainly the Lively Lure brand, tiny Micro Mullet hard body lures. We tried a variety of colours but found white to be the most productive.

The types of fish we caught you will not find along the coastline. The rainforest species we encountered were some really hard fighting sooty grunter around 35cm, cole grunter to 20cm, spangled perch/ rainbow fish to 25cm and mouth almighty to 15cm. They weren't big fish but all relevant to the very light outfits we were fishing with. The 35cm sooty I caught was the equivalent to catching a monster mangrove on heavier gear. It was a real tussle to land this fish up onto the sandy beach and it fought tooth and nail all the way. Overall the bigger fish were pulled out of areas which had a fallen tree in the water or even in the shade of an over hanging tree. You couldn't fish each hole for too long because the bite went quiet after catching a few fish and I'm guessing there had been too much disturbance in a short period. These little streams see virtually no abnormal activity especially during the middle parts of the day. The couple of trips we did were a real adventure and doing something different was really cool.

As us kids call it, keeping in line with the 'Iso' regulations we did not see another soul. With the extra school holidays I'll put pen to paper next month too. As Dad says, at least you can show your teachers you are covering your English requirements. ■

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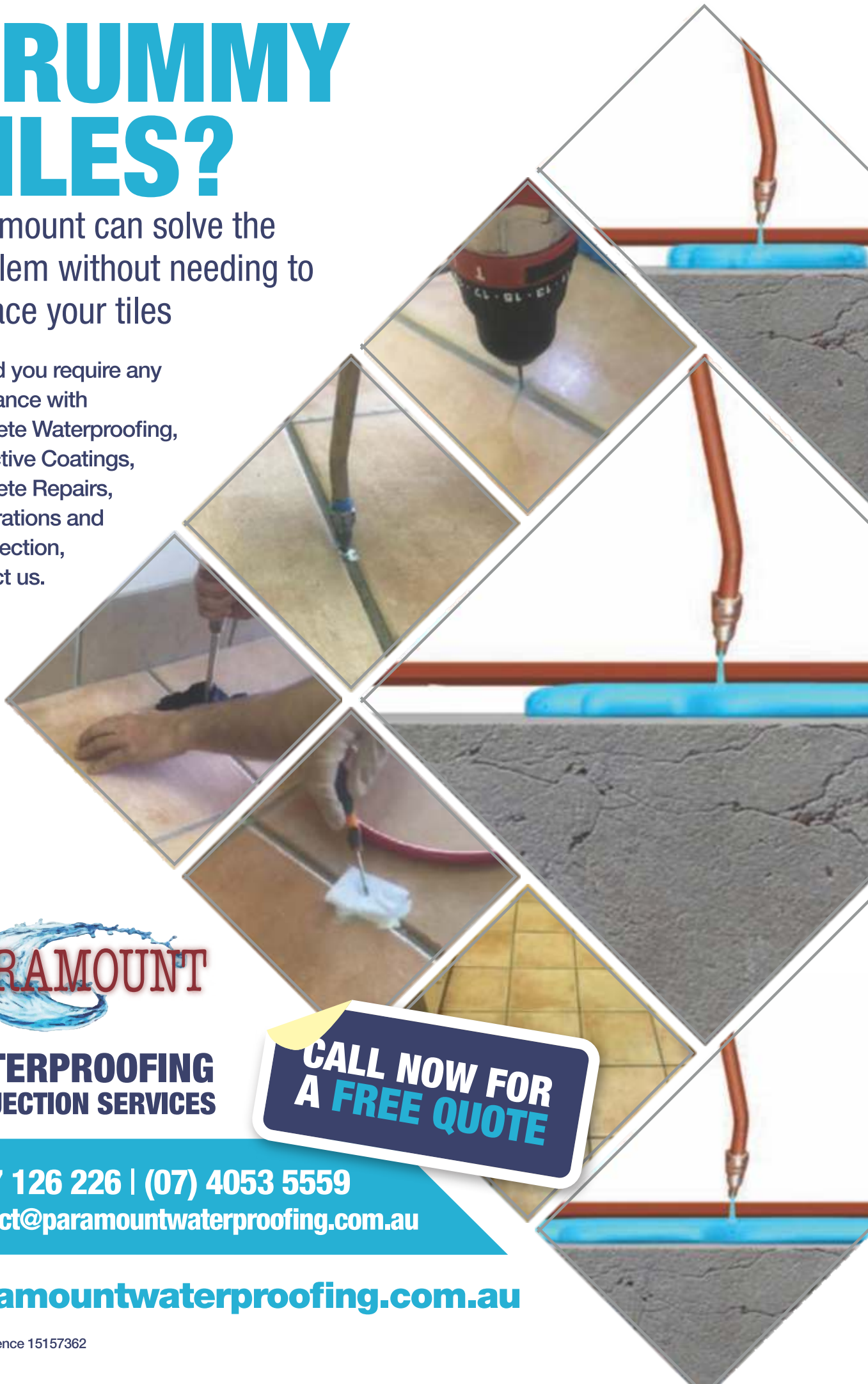
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# Fishing Port Douglas

At Fishing Port Douglas for several months now we have been revamping a new look website bringing it into line with the latest technology available to view it from.

The exciting new re-launch will occur on Monday 20th April by local company ICIT. [www.fishingportdouglas.com.au](http://www.fishingportdouglas.com.au)

The original website was first put on-line in 1999 and was gradually built up over time. It has been and still is the highest ranking google search for over two decades when it comes to fishing in the region. It served its purpose brilliantly. However, as we are all aware the portable means of communication and receiving information has changed dramatically in recent years. Mobile phones and tablets are now side by side with the old fashioned lap top or desk top computer for obtaining information. The old website was still function able on

these newer forms of media but not as user friendly as it could be. Nowadays people in general expect the right information on demand without any extra effort.

So with all this in mind, the re-development began awhile ago. You may ask why has it taken so long. The answer to that is simple. Not only is it the most informative local fishing website available, it is the most comprehensive in FNQ and QLD. The detail is in the 70 individual pages of information available and very easy to navigate and access.

The website is a One Stop Shop when it comes to fishing in the area:

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- ✂ Google Earth Maps of River, Coastal & Reef Systems
- ✂ Local Fishing Gear Sales On-Line
- ✂ Essential Boating Services
- ✂ Videos & Much More!

It does sound like a lot of information but it is very easily accessed and very user friendly - you must have a look!

One of the main goals of the website is to attract anglers from all over the world to come and experience our wonderful fishing opportunities in undeniably a World Class Destination.

Like any part of business the new website



will continue to develop and prosper. When the area returns to some normality our recreational fishing industry will be primed and ready to go.

### Fishing Rules Update Covid 19

When it comes to recreational fishing the QLD Government says, "You can go boating and fishing for recreational/exercise purposes in line with looking after your mental well-being and undertaking exercise. The two-person rule applies, except if you are going boating with persons that you reside with. It must however be in your own local waters. The social distancing and personal hygiene rules everyone has been asked to follow still apply — at the boat ramp and onboard." From my observations this restriction is monitored seriously by authorities at the boat ramps.

Victoria is currently Australia's only state or territory that has banned recreational fishing, imposing on-the-spot fines of up to \$1,652.



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# magical daintree

## New Arrivals & the Old Remain with Bruce Belcher

In the last issue I wrote about Lizzie the croc and how we waited for the eggs to hatch. It finally happened yesterday (March 11th) and she produced 6 hatchlings. WIN News hopes to visit tomorrow.

On about the first of February we received notice from the Douglas Shire that the ferry would be closed for 5 days from the 28th of the month, for a hull inspection, for public safety. I'm told this was a Federal Government directive to Maritime Safety Queensland for compliancy reasons. Apparently, in 2013, regulations were introduced whereby machinery, like the ferry, would need to be checked every 5 years. I don't recall this ever happening in the past but it's a changing world. So, basically everyone was given about 4 weeks to sort out their activities to co-operate over that 5 days.

To some people, like me, this was not a big deal but to others, particularly those on the northside of the river there was considerable concern as trade would halt during that time.

That 5 days period would be considered the lowest time for tourism in the year. So, as it had to happen then that was the time. Blame for the short notice was pointed in different directions, even from our very prominent Federal member in Cairns. At the end of the day we just had to deal with it and get on with our lives.

This event saw the argument for a bridge, again. Finger pointing at high levels became more prominent and emotions were high. Our mayor, along with other conservationists, expressed concerns that a bridge would spoil the amenity of the Cape Trib region, the very reason why tourists come here. Over many years, feedback among tourists, via social media, has seen the popularity of these ancient rainforests flourish. A bridge over the river would require major roadworks to be done. Rare and endangered wildlife, like the cassowary, would be at further risk from increased road traffic. Then you'd see traffic lights, eventually. Then the sounds of sirens would echo through the area. Then we would question why we did it. However, once you've done it, you can't undo it. So, from my selfish point of view, let's keep it low key and enjoy what we have.

I've been in arguments about this for many years. My wife and I checked it out when we were new to the area, 35 years ago. After considerable thought, knowing that electricity supply and the introduction of a bridge was not going to happen in the foreseeable future, we chose not to live there. It would be nice to think that those living there now,

had that choice.

That choice to live on the south side gave us the opportunity to get into tourism and now we are flourishing and most of it has come from the magnetism of this euphoric experience of the Cape Trib section of the Greater Daintree National Park. See you next month.



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