Chapter 4
Norfolk Island Fishery

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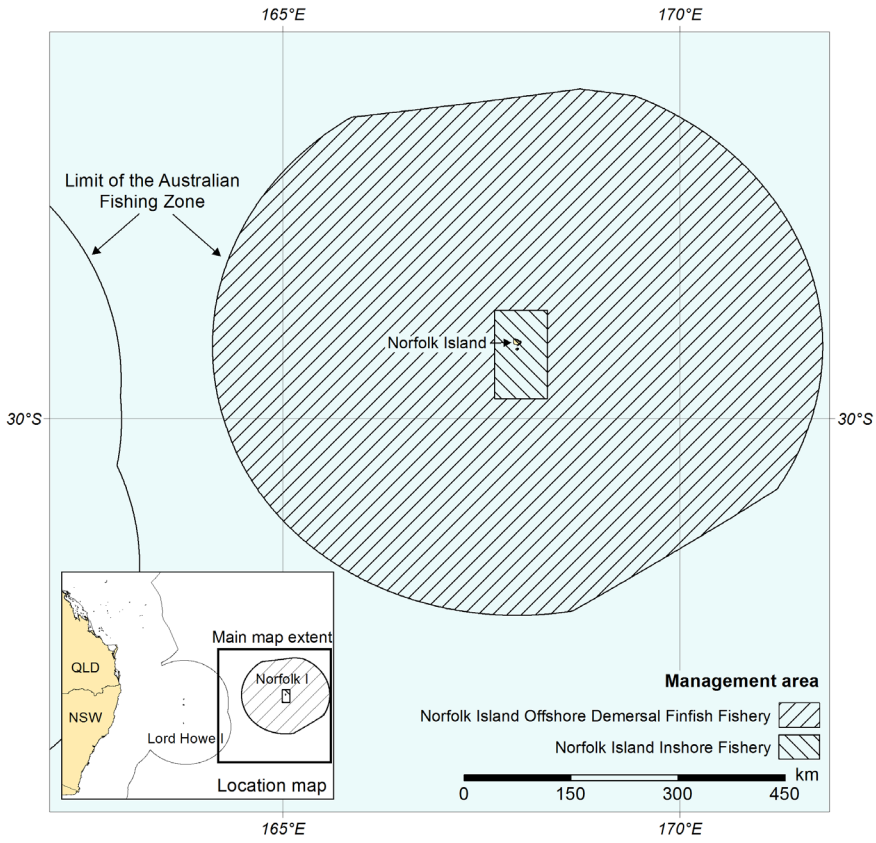
FIGURE 4.1 Management area of the Norfolk Island Fishery



4.1 Description of the fishery

The Norfolk Island Fishery (NIF) is currently an inshore recreational and charter-based line fishery. An offshore exploratory commercial trawl-and-line fishery operated between 2000 and 2003.

4.1.1 Norfolk Island Inshore Recreational and Charter Fishery

The Norfolk Island Inshore Recreational and Charter Fishery covers an area of 67 nautical miles (nm) × 40 nm on the shelf and upper slope adjacent to Norfolk Island. Demersal species are primarily targeted on reefs and pinnacles 5–10 nm (but up to 30 nm) offshore, at depths of 20–50 m. The catch is dominated by redthroat emperor (*Lethrinus miniatus*), known locally as 'trumpeter', but around 40 commercial species have been identified from the inshore fishery. Other important demersal species (or species groups) are cods and groupers (Serranidae), Queensland grouper (*Epinephelus lanceolatus*), yellowtail kingfish (*Seriola lalandi*) and pink snapper (*Pagrus auratus*). Important pelagic species include yellowfin tuna (*Thunnus albacares*), trevally (*Pseudocaranx* spp.) and skipjack tuna (*Katsuwonus pelamis*).

The fishery has three components:

- a semisubsistence shore fishery using pole-and-line methods for wrasses (Labridae), damselfish (Pomacentridae), and cods and groupers, and the gathering of periwinkles (*Nerita atramentosa*)
- a recreational/semicommercial small-vessel fishery for domestic consumption, comprising approximately 90 vessels (AFMA 2010); surplus catch is sold to local restaurants, but local catches are sporadic and local demand is supplemented by imported frozen fish
- a recreational charter fishery from the shore or small vessels, using rod and reel with lures or bait to take pelagic and demersal species.

Limited research has been conducted on the NIF. The Australian Fisheries Management Authority's data summary for the Norfolk Island Inshore Recreational and Charter Fishery provides catch data for the period 2006 to 2009 (AFMA 2010).

4.1.2 Norfolk Island Offshore Demersal Finfish Fishery

The Norfolk Island Offshore Demersal Finfish Fishery has not operated since 2003, when the two trawl and five demersal-line exploratory permits expired. There was limited effort in the fishery for the duration of these exploratory permits, with permit holders failing to meet the required 50 days of fishing (over a three-year period). Low catches of orange roughy (*Hoplostethus atlanticus*) and alfonsino (*Beryx splendens*) indicated the potential for small stocks in the Australian Exclusive Economic Zone around Norfolk Island. Bass groper (*Polyprion americanus*), hapuka (*P. oxygeneios*) and blue-eye trevalla (*Hyperoglyphe antarctica*) dominated hook catches.

No harvest strategy has been developed for the NIF because of the absence of commercial fishing activity. A harvest strategy will need to be developed if the commercial fishery recommences.

4.2 Biological status

Data on catch and effort for the target species in the inshore fishery are limited, although anecdotal reports suggest that catch rates in recent years may have declined from historical levels reported by Grant (1981). The long-term commercial viability and sustainability of the demersal offshore fishery are unknown. There have been no stock assessments or biomass estimates for species taken within the inshore or offshore fisheries. No stock status classifications have been given to this fishery, since there are no defined stocks for management purposes.

4.3 Economic status

The offshore fishery is currently closed to commercial fishing. All permits for the fishery have expired, and no valid fishing concessions exist. Low catch levels and the failure of vessels to meet the required number of fishing days during the exploratory fishery period suggest that there is limited potential for positive net economic returns to be generated from this fishery. For the inshore fishery, no commercial fishing permits currently exist, and no indicators are available to allow conclusions on the fishery's economic performance.

4.4 Environmental status

No ecological risk assessments have been undertaken or are planned for this fishery, because of the absence of commercial fishing activity. No interactions with threatened, endangered or protected species were reported in 2012.

4.5 Literature cited

AFMA (Australian Fisheries Management Authority) 2010, *Norfolk Island Inshore Fishery data summary 2006–2009*, AFMA, Canberra.

Grant, C 1981, 'High catch rates in Norfolk Island dropline survey', *Australian Fisheries*, March 1981.