

PRESS RELEASE



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For Immediate Release- 14/12/23

Cairns, Australia.

Fish Kill Warning- Freshwater Creek, Redlynch Valley below Copperlode Dam.

Copperlode Fish and Kayak was established in 2015. We operate Barramundi fishing charters in Copperlode Dam for locals, visitors and tourists alike. Our business is highly successful, and was nominated for an award at the World Recreational Fishing Conference in Melbourne this year. We have also received a high commendation from the Fisheries Research Development Corporation. We have featured in a number of television programs, including the “Anaconda Fish of Origin” in 2023, and bring substantial tourism dollars to the Cairns economy.

Copperlode Dam has been stocked, with Cairns Regional Council approval, **at our expense** with in excess of 30,000 barramundi, which are now all mature age spawning fish averaging over 8kg in weight each. This has involved a significant investment of time, money, the purchase of boats and associated equipment specifically for exclusive use in Copperlode Dam.

There has been a **spillway net** installed since 2016 to prevent and minimise fish kills during adverse weather events such as the current flooding associated with ex TC Jasper.

The net is engineered and designed specifically for this purpose, and has proven itself effective especially during the 1 in 120 year flooding event in March 2018.

On Tuesday, 12 December 2023, **Cairns Regional Council ordered the removal of the spillway net from Copperlode Dam** without consultation, despite our warning of potential consequences of a major fish kill. The increased likelihood of a fish kill has been substantiated independently by a Fisheries Ecologist.

The spillway net is no longer operational as Cairns Regional Council have facilitated its removal. Copperlode Fish & Kayak have vehemently opposed the removal of the net.

Lake Morris has commenced spilling as the dam is now in excess of 100% capacity, and a fish kill is now imminent.

Cairns Regional Council justification for removal of the spillway net:

“Council has formed the view that, with the impending weather event, the spillway net is improper equipment connected to Council’s dam infrastructure.”

This is despite Cairns Regional Council referencing the “Fish Barrier Net- Operators Manual” (2022) in their removal order. The operator’s manual clearly explains the purpose of the barrier net is to minimise fish kill. Council has reviewed this document on a number of occasions.

Kim Andersen Sport Fishing Charters Pty Ltd (Trading as Copperlode Fish and Kayak) has done everything in our power to prevent any potential Barramundi Fish kill. We are deeply saddened and traumatised at the potential impacts to our fish, the community in Redlynch Valley and the devastating impact that this absurd decision has on our business. The estimated replacement value of the stocked live fish is now well in excess of \$6 million dollars.

To report fish kill incidents to the Queensland Government, phone the **24/7 Pollution Hotline—1300 130 372 (option 2)**

For further comment please contact Kim Andersen on 0408 187 291.



Photo 1- Spillway Net in action at Copperlode Dam.



Photo 2- A typical sized Copperlode Dam Barramundi captured by a German Tourist in November 2023.