

AIBT History. Written by former GFAA President Graham Williams

The AIBT as it is known today was first held in 1981 at Tangalooma, Morton Bay Island, Qld.

The origin of it was it was taken from the **All Australian contest** which was first run in 1963. This was an open contest fishing all over Australia through to 1975 with the winner's trophy being the E W Palmer Trophy. The trophy was specially made and donated in 1963 By Ernest W Palmer, AO who was the GFAA President in 1962-63 and was awarded GFAA Life Membership in 1965.

This was the only Tournament ever run under the auspices of GFAA, unfortunately the States and clubs stopped wanting to run this contest because they thought it was too hard to organise a Contest that had to be fished from all ports of Australia over a period of a year so GFAA Executive suspended it.

In 1981 Mal Ramsay on behalf of Moreton Bay GFC put a proposal to GFAA to hold an International Tournament specifically for Billfish which was to be held at Tangalooma and under the auspices of GFAA.

The GFAA President at the time was John C Johnston who fully supported the concept so he and the GFAA Executive decided to again have a tournament run under the auspices of GFAA. As it was to be an open Tournament and Mal Ramsay had organised some International teams to compete it was decided to call this new Tournament the Australian International Billfish Tournament, (AIBT)

As the All Australian contest had stopped in 1975 John Johnston wanted to honour his long term friend Ern Palmer so he spoke with Ern and requested he change his original trophy to the new tournament and donate it to GFAA for the award of the winning team in the new tournament. Ern agreed to this thus it is now awarded in the AIBT. Mal Ramsay also decided to donate a trophy which was to be for the winning International team and Morton Bay club donated another trophy which was for the runner up team.

The AIBT was run in Queensland waters from the start in 1981 through to 1994. The number of teams fishing the event were only small and no International teams had fished it since a Hong Kong based team won it in 1988.

In 1995 I was the Executive Vice President of GFAA and suggested that the AIBT being the only GFAA Tournament should be fished in other waters than just Queensland which I believed would increase the number of teams fishing it and make such a tournament more prestigious. This was accepted by the GFAA President of the time, Bob Lowe so at the GFAA AGM in 1995 the delegates and States agreed that a State Association could apply to GFAA for the rights to hold the AIBT which is what happened and the AIBT was taken up by NSWGFA and run at Port Stephens in NSW waters for the first time.

In 1997 when I became GFAA President I suggested it would be better to allow the club running the tournament to have it for 2 years to allow more opportunities for better Sponsorship, this was accepted so from 1998 it was awarded to the State Association for a club to hold it for 2 years.

As stated before there had not been an International team win the Tournament since 1988 so the Mal Ramsay Trophy had not been won for a long time so as President of GFAA I decided to speak to Mal Ramsay and see if he would mind changing his trophy from International winning Team to Champion Angler in the AIBT then it would be awarded each year. Mal thought it a good idea so it was changed in 2003. Hence the 3 trophies for the AIBT from 2003 are the EW Palmer Trophy (winning team), Morton Bay Trophy (runner-up team) and the Mal Ramsay Trophy (champion angler)

Since that time the AIBT has grown into a really great tournament with very large numbers fishing it. It was awarded to NSWGFA for a club nominated to run it from 1995 through to 2010 namely because no other State put their hand up. At the 2009 GFAA AGM you requested the Tournament be held in north WA, this was granted and in 2011 it was held in WA waters for the first time. It went back to Queensland waters last year for the first time since 1994.