Western Port is one of the best southern fisheries we have. From rough ‘n tough gummy sharks to kidney slapping whiting, this little waterway has it all. The only problem: it is heavily influenced by tidal variation. When the tide runs, it can be difficult to keep your bait near the bottom.

The strength of the water pressure keeps some anglers from fishing the Port because of the sinker weight required to keep baits within a fish’s reach. If the correct amount of lead is not used in the channels, baits will lift off the bottom and away from the strike zone, which means less bites and no action.

Those who decide to fight the current will find great success fishing for a wide range of species using only a handful of rigs. In this article I will outline six rigs that best suit the species of Western Port, to guide you on your way to successful fishing.

**THE PATERNOSTER**

This rig is one of the most versatile rigs and is used throughout Australia for both land-based fishing and fishing from the boat. The paternoster rig is ideal in slow water situations when targeting leatherjacket, snapper, whiting and a host of other species. It can be tied and set up in a matter of seconds or pre-tied and stored for later use.

Two main knots are used to tie the paternoster: the uni knot and a dropper loop. A hook is placed on each dropper: this will vary in size depending on the fish you are targeting. For example, when fishing for whiting I use a Black Magic KL size 1/0, or a KL 5/0 hook on each dropper when targeting snapper.

Sinker weight will vary depending on the strength of the tide, so carry a range of weights with you.

**EXTENDED PATERNOSTER RIG**

The Extended Paternoster Rig is variation of the paternoster. Rather than the sinker placed at the bottom of the rig with two hooks suspended above it, the extended paternoster has the sinker placed before the hooks enabling the two hooks to sit along the sea floor. This version of the paternoster is ideal when targeting whiting, elephant sharks and even gummy sharks. You can also target snapper with this rig if the hooks and leader are stepped up to larger sizes and strengths.

**THE RUNNING SINKER RIG**

The running sinker rig is the most popular rig used in the Port. It allows the angler to change their sinker weight according to the speed of the current. It’s important to minimise the weight used wherever possible, while still keeping bait on the sea floor. Snapper, elephants and gummy sharks respond really well when this rig is in use. You may also encounter other species such as whiting, rock cod, and stingrays while using this rig.

The most important piece of terminal tackle when making the running sinker rig is the Ezy Rig sinker clip. This clip enables the angler to change the weight of their sinker within seconds according to the flow of the tide, without having to retie any knots.

When fishing in Western Port for gummies and snapper, I use a heavy leader for the running sinker rig: 60lb and 80lb tough trace containing two 5/0 KL circle hooks is the best way to avoid bust offs.

When targeting elephants 20lb leader will suffice with one 3/0 KL circle hook. If you’re looking for larger sharks you can still use a running sinker rig, but use a few metres of 170 pound wire to attach your hooks onto, rather than mono trace.

**LIVEBAIT RIG**

Live baiting in Western Port is a great style of fishing for the big sharks, but you will also attract a few other prized species. School sharks, bronze whalers and mulloway are suckers for a swimming livebait and you’ll often experience an increase in your success rate if you switch to livebaits.

To rig a livebait you’ll need a livebait hook suitable for your targeted species, along with either wire trace for toothies or fluorocarbon leader if you’re chasing a different species. A livebait can be pinned through the clear membrane in front of the eyes, passed though the shoulders or inserted into the top jaw through the mouth.

**THE SQUID SETUP**

Fishing for squid in Western Port usually involves presenting a bait of silver whiting on a squid prong. Although the cast and retrieve of squid jigs does work, baited jigs return the most calamari captures in Port.
Land-based anglers fishing from any of the piers around the Port have found hand-lining calamari to be successful, although most cast the float set up from a rod to gain greater distance.

The set up is simple and only requires a few components: a packet of swivels, squid prong, squid float, a packet of snap swivels and a metre of 20lb trace material. A swivel is tied onto one end of the leader, a float is threaded, and then at the opposite end of the leader, a snap swivel is tied. A whiting or pilchard is then threaded onto the squid prong and snap swivel, and then all you have to do is tie the top swivel onto your rod or hand line and toss it out.

LAND BASED SHARK RIG

Catching sharks from the beach is great fun and with the vast array of surf beaches on the outskirts of Western Port, this simple rig will be useful in this region. Similar to a running sinker rig, a heavy star sinker is attached to the end of the angler’s fishing line. A leader extends from a snap swivel where the sinker is attached and the hooks are placed onto the end of the leader. Popular baits include fresh salmon fillet, tuna fillet or a whole calamari.

So there you have it. No matter what species you care to target in the waters of Western Port, you’ll find a suitable rig amongst these six simple examples.

Facts

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<th>TERMINALS REQUIRED FOR ALL WESTERN PORT RIGS</th>
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Black Magic 8 to 12lb Fluorocarbon.

Wire Leader: 170lb Super Flex Nylon coated.

100lb Super Flex Nylon coated.

| Hooks: | 10kg to 20 kg rolling swivels. |
| Snap Swivels: | Size number 1 to 5. |
| Sinkers: | A good range from 1oz to 20oz depending on tidal strength. |
| Others: | Red Beads, Squid float, squid prong and Bate Mate. |

Images

The Paternoster rig is a very versatile rig and can be used in Westernport to catch a wide variety of species including snapper and whiting.
The extended paternoster rig, which presents baits right on the bottom, is suitable for targeting bottom feeders such as whiting and elephant fish.

When used with an Ezi Clip, the running sinker rig allows anglers to quickly change the amount of lead weight used as the current changes. This is useful when targeting fish such as snapper and gummy sharks in areas of strong tidal flow.
Using live baits for targetting sharks requires a rig that allows the baitfish to swim freely in a lifelike fashion.

Fishing for squid in Western Port usually involves presenting a bait of silver whiting on a squid prong.

Targetting sharks from the shore requires a specialist rig capable of being cast into the surf.