

# Australian Lure Fishing Podcast [Episode 465](#)



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## Vinnie Versfeld

North Queensland Fishing Personality

Vinnie Versfeld has fished all over the world but has been a keen fisherman, guide and social media personality in the Townsville area for 14 years. Vinnie has set himself the objective of nailing a meter of barra in the shallow waters of the beaches to the north of Townsville and in today's episode explains how he sight fished not just barramundi, but a range of northern species from the shore.



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## Vinnies Townsville Flats Fishing Tips

- The flats around Townsville are shallow and expansive but you'll find that pelagic species such as trevallies and queenfish, even mackerel will make visits from time to time. Bread and butter northern species such as bream, whiting, flathead, barred grunter are always present, while barramundi and mangrove jack are also present in good numbers. Often fish found on the flats are transitioning from estuarine to coastal habitat or vice versa, feeding on the plentiful baitfish and other food items as they move.
- Anywhere there is a drain is a fish highway and predatory species such as barra and jacks will often hold station in these drains on the runout tide as baitfish are dragged off the flats and into the drains.
- Due to the shallow and often very clear water, fishing on the flats is very visual, even when you're using sub-surface lures.

- Stealth is super important, don't wade noisily as fast movements and splashing or heavy footsteps will spook fish that are already on high alert. Vinnie shuffles his feet without lifting them from the water. He prefers to wade barefoot in most situations, but wears neoprene booties when there are rocky, stonefish habitats around. Be aware of stingers, crocodiles, stonefish, cone shells and other northern nasties and be careful to manage the risks. Often if there is a place that fish are likely to travel through it can be best to stand and wait for fish to arrive, rather than move around and risk spooking them.
- Quality sun glasses are an important piece of gear for this style of fishing. You won't always see fish, often you'll be looking for and responding to shadows, an opening mouth of an unseen fish, a wake or a flash of scales. "Nervous water" (places where bait are being scared and are creating a rippled surface) is another great sign, even if you can't see the actual fish. You need to figure out what direction the fish are travelling and at what speed the fish are moving so you know where to place the cast.
- Gutters, points, drains, isolated snags and other structures that hold bait are the key features and the first things to look for when you're checking out a potential fishing spot. Fish rarely move straight across the flats, they'll almost always follow and edge or channel of some kind.
- Vinnie prefers to fish 2 hours either side of the low tide when he's on the flats, as the bait are concentrated around the drains at these times and the fish know it.
- A glassy day is hard to fish, as is a strong wind. A light breeze, neap tides and a little cloud cover makes for the easiest fishing, though sunny days make it easier to see the fish.

## Vinnie's Northern Flats Fishing Tackle

- Vinnie uses a 7' rod for extra casting distance. A 3-5 kg spin stick with matching 2500-3000 size reel, 10lb braid and 30lb leader is ideal, despite the possibility that a bigger fish may eventually come along and rub through the leader..

## Vinnie's Northern Flats Fishing Lures

- A 3" Z-Man MinnowZ on a 1/4oz, size 3/0 jig head is a great combination that is great for imitating the prawns and poddy mullet typically found in 2ft or less of water. Judge what the fish is doing and make sure to cast far enough ahead of its movement to not spook it, then work the lure based on what the fish is feeding on. For example, a barra that is cruising and eating poddy mullet might respond to a slow or medium rolled lure, while a golden trevally with its head down feeding on prawns might respond better to a retrieve that keeps the jig head on the bottom and the tail pointing upwards. GT's or other pelagics busting up might

respond to a high-speed retrieve, whilst jacks feeding in a drain might respond to a slow roll that imitates a prawn being dragged into the drain by the tide.

- Small stickbaits and poppers are great for searching and covering water. Lures in the 4" size range are perfect, with poppers being best when there's a bit of chop and stickbaits when it's flatter. The 80mm Fish Inc Slider Popper is a great option that is small profile but can make the commotion of a much larger lure, it can also be made to walk the dog with a little practice. Once again, try and work the lure in the same way as the bait is moving. Vinnie fishes these lures straight from the box because he's using softer drags and lighter gear. When the hooks are shot, he'll upgrade to BKK's.
- 3" shallow diving lures of all descriptions work well. Small, floating hard bodied lures can be given a hook upgrade to make them suspend or slow float, enabling them to be kept in the zone a little longer. A "twitch, twitch, pause, twitch, pause" style retrieve will usually work very well, with the first couple of twitches getting the fish interested and the strike often coming after the third twitch. Mix up the duration of the pause, again keeping an eye on what the fish are doing. If fish are following but not eating, try a colour change.