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Reef balls were also used in the ocean off Phuket in Thailand to encourage the recovery of marine life after the 2004 tsunami.

Hundreds of the reef balls have been dropped into Lake Macquarie and at another experimental site in Botany Bay.

"We're very confident these artificial reefs will make a difference," said NSW Primary Industries Minister Ian Macdonald.

Lake Macquarie fishermen say they already have.

"You can go there any time of day or night and pull fish," said charter boat operator Brad Minors. "It's helping tourism."



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