

**MEDIA RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
8 May 2017



Moreton Bay Commercial Fishers Abandoned

THE peak body for Queensland's wild-catch fishermen has welcomed \$20 million in Federal funding for prawn farmers affected by white spot but questioned why their sector has been abandoned.

"It's a great day for some and not so great for others if you are a commercial fishing business owner in the Moreton Bay region," said the Queensland Seafood Industry Association's (QSIA) President, Keith Harris.

"There are some 300 micro and small fishing related businesses across the Moreton Bay region – including trawl and crab fishers – impacted by white spot that continue to be impacted in the wild and an ongoing movement control order on our commercial product.

"These businesses generate almost \$20.5 million yet have received no assistance. At least 20 businesses have had their incomes severely impacted since December 2016 and still no help".

The Deputy Prime Minister and Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce has announced the Federal Government will give \$20 million to prawn farmers impacted by white spot but said wild-catch fishermen are the responsibility of the State Government.

Mr Harris described the Federal Government funding decision as "illogical and discriminatory".

"We have no issue with \$20 million funding for prawn farmers. It is appropriate and deserved. Their businesses have been devastated by a foreign disease inflicted on them through no fault of their own.

"But why has the Federal Government abandoned wild-catch fishermen and related businesses who have also been seriously impacted? It's illogical, it's discriminatory and it's un-Australian.

Mr Harris said claiming the State Government is somehow responsible for compensation to commercial fishers is a poor way to deflect responsibility for the introduction of white spot.

"The blame for this biosecurity meltdown lays squarely at the feet of the Federal Government," he said. "We have been warning the Federal Government for over a decade that allowing imports of uncooked prawns from countries with white spot would inevitably see it infect prawn stocks in Australia. Now it's happened.

"The Federal Government is loath to admit its biosecurity protocols and management allowed this virus to enter Australia but that is a simple fact. "Wild-catch fishermen

are being treated shamefully for something they have no control over. The control of the border rests with the Federal Government, not the State Government or the commercial fishers in Moreton Bay.

“Supporting someone when they are down is the Australian way – whether that’s from cyclone, flood, fire or, in this case, a devastating foreign disease. However, on this occasion, for Moreton Bay’s abandoned wild-catch fishing families, that Aussie comradeship and compassion is sadly lacking from Barnaby’s Government.”

ENDS

Further Information:

Keith Harris, QSIA President, Mobile 0427 713 445
Eric Perez, QSIA Chief Executive Officer, Mobile 0417 631 353,
eo@qsia.com.au