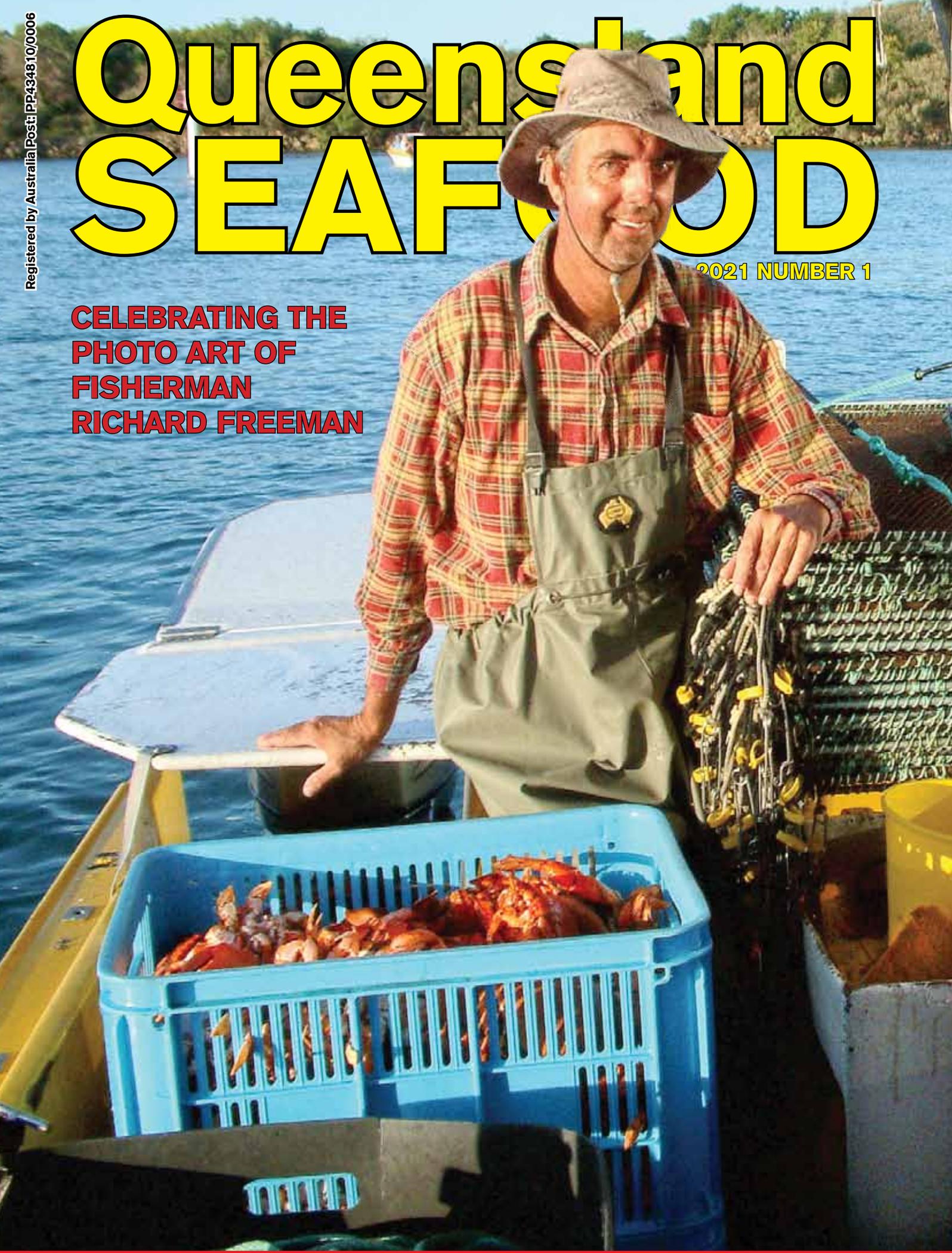


Queensland SEAFOOD

2021 NUMBER 1

**CELEBRATING THE
PHOTO ART OF
FISHERMAN
RICHARD FREEMAN**



WE LOSE A LEGEND: DENIS O'CONNELL

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AGM elects new board. Page 5.



Quota confusion. Page 8



White spot in the wild. Page 18.



Vale Denis O'Connell. Page 26.

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In this issue

QSIA Chair Allan Bobbermen is urging fishermen to put in an appeal to your proposed quota allocation regardless of what you may think the outcome from Fisheries Queensland will be and then proceed to QCAT if you do not receive a favourable response from fisheries managers.

He says there are a lot of anomalies which are raising their ugly heads as this harvest strategy suitcase is being unpacked that could have been addressed by Fisheries Queensland but remain a problem for industry. See page 4.

QSIA CEO Eric Perez addresses several issues in his column in this edition, including continuing issues of concern thrown up by the “reform” process, including Spanish mackerel filleting at sea, the landing of catch, and interactions with the Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol. And he introduces the new QSIA Board. Turn to page 6.

Quota allocation is a major issue. On page 8, Shane Snow discusses at length the confusing issues regarding quota and fisheries management, especially real-time

quota allocation versus “Ghost Quota”. On page 11, results are presented from the QSIA questionnaire on the potential impacts of quota allocation on fishermen. And, on page 13, there is a summary of the QSIA submission to a Senate inquiry examining the pros and cons of quota management.

White spot disease has gone wild in south-eastern Queensland, literally, with confirmation the disease is being carried by prawns and other crustaceans, and authorities apparently giving up hope of eradicating it. See pages 18-21 for more on this terrible story (including court action against the Federal Government).

As if the seafood industry needed yet more restrictions on its operations, an assessment of planned new restrictions on where our catch can be landed is calculated to cost individual fishermen tens of thousands of dollars. Details on page 22.

And, in this edition, we sadly farewell one of our industry’s legends and finest ambassadors, Denis O’Connell, after a rich and full life as a fisherman, industry leader and local government representative. You can read Denis’ story, in his own words, on pages 26-27.

Front cover: Spanner crab fisherman Richard Freeman with some of his catch in his beloved 5.6-metre Shark Cat. Richard has also found time while working alone at sea to shoot some stunning images that are as much art as they are photography. One example is on the outside back cover of this magazine and others are on pages 15-17.

Queensland Seafood is the official journal of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association Inc, the peak body representing the State’s seafood industry.

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PRESIDENT ON THE LINE

Be prepared to fight to protect your business

HELLO all. I hope you all are managing okay and are preparing to take on the fight to protect your business and assets.

No doubt you all would have seen the release from Fisheries recently outlining the schedule for rolling out this reform nonsense.

I would urge you all to put in an appeal to your proposed quota allocation regardless of what you may think the outcome from Fisheries Queensland will be and then proceed to QCAT if you do not receive a favourable response from fisheries managers.

Bottom line here is there are a lot of anomalies which are raising their ugly heads as this harvest strategy suitcase is being unpacked.

These could have been addressed properly if the Department had gone down the road of normal regulation change and done a regulatory impact statement (RIS).

However, they convinced Treasury that they will follow the guidelines for

Better Regulation and do a post-implementation analysis in two years' time.

What a joke! You and I both know in two years' time what a mess this industry will be in.

Just look at what has unfolded with the same strategy used for the vessel monitoring system (VMS), which has resulted in the State Ombudsman getting on their case.

Historically, this seems to be the strategy Fisheries Queensland roll with: introduce a regulation and fix the mess up on the fly. Consequently, this is why we have the many regulation amendments in the Fisheries Act.

What are we doing?

You have no doubt read the updates Eric has been putting out. The four points below cover just some of the important issues.

1. Podcasts with Chis Thompson around questions raised with issues with the Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol (QBFP). Thanks, Chris, for your time and effort.

Feedback from this has been good.

2. QSIA has put in a submission to the Federal Government to support a WTO for the mullet fishery.
3. QSIA has put in a detailed submission to the Senate inquiry into quota in Australian fisheries and hopefully this organisation will be able to speak when the inquiry moves to Queensland. QSIA would like to thank those who contributed to this detailed submission.
4. QSIA has written to Fisheries Queensland around issues with the reform process with little or no response. One big-ticket issue is the landing points for quota species. Fisheries Queensland seems to be reluctant to engage in serious conversation around this issue.

Membership

It is encouraging to see we are still gaining members and our members have been engaging with questionnaires Eric has put out.

If you have any concerns which may affect your operation that have not yet been identified, please let Eric know so QSIA can act on your concern. Your input is valuable to achieve outcomes for our industry.

Conclusion

Industry is not in a good place at the moment with rollout of this harvest strategy pending. This mess could



The QSIA annual general meeting at Urangan was well attended.

be better described as a Social Experiment which a blind man with a cork in his eye can see is going to go pear-shaped.

To most, this painful exercise of drip-feeding information out to industry is hamstringing business decisions.

In the meantime, we need to roll our sleeves up and be prepared for the fight, being mindful that some of this nonsense may be yet to be tested in the courts.

We need to keep networking, as it is one of the most valuable tools in this fight.

Well-attended AGM

The COVID-delayed QSIA 2020 annual general meeting in Urangan earlier this year was well attended and mapped out a program for the year ahead.

Board members elected at the AGM included Shane Snow, Tony Reisenwebber and Kevin Reibel (in photo below).

CEO Eric Perez has more details in his column on page 6.

Good fishing and stay safe.

Allan Bobbermen
QSIA President



Re-elected QSIA Board members include (from left) Shane Snow, Tony Reisenwebber and Kevin Reibel.

Fishermen report disturbing behaviour by QBFP

I HAVE recently written to Minister for Agriculture & Fisheries Mark Furner about fishermen's reports of behaviour by Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) officers. What follows is the text of that letter.

The office of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) has been receiving disturbing calls from fishers regarding interactions with Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP).

The office has also received feedback from industry operators outlining incidents involving the misinterpretations of fisheries legislation by QBFP officers. In addition, petty nit-picking has resulted in unreasonable fines and cautions.

Commercial fishermen have challenged the infringements and cautions, which has resulted in dismissal of claims. (In industry lingo, these are "shit pinches".)

You must appreciate that taking time out to contest loosely interpreted regulations is wasting our valuable fishing time.

Queensland commercial fishers are sensing they are being singled out and being victimised to sow fear across industry. In some cases, QBFP officers that do not fully understand the regulations are being paid to enforce or wilfully misinterpreting fisheries legislation and this is totally unacceptable.

The QSIA office has had numerous calls from fishers who have phoned Fisheries Queensland managers asking for an interpretation of regulations and we seem to be getting the same generic response: "We will have to get back to you". I am afraid to tell you that we are still waiting for a return phone call.

Furthermore, industry asked for a fact sheet to be put out around the grey areas of the legislation back in 2020.

A memo was put out by the Director-General saying the Department is working on a fact sheet to clarify issues in question. We are still waiting for that to be provided to industry.

Industry has also petitioned managers to have the fishers in their regional areas call port meetings to clarify issues in contention but, yet again, this seems to have fallen on deaf ears (an all too common scenario from Fisheries Queensland).

The bottom line here is that the actions of community-minded, responsible commercial fishers clearly demonstrate their level of willingness to comply with the regulations.

We all are aware that regulations and their enforcement are the base line for a sustainable fishery when carried out for their intended purpose. I am afraid, at this point in time, this is not happening.

What needs to happen from here is that fishery managers need to get their house in order and issue instructions to field staff to have a change of attitude and refrain from issuing questionable fines until such time as there is a clearer understanding of the regulations they are trying to enforce.

My industry are not criminals and deserve due process with respect and procedural fairness, something that sadly appears to be overlooked.

It appears that your Department is leaving industry with little choice but to document every interaction with any QBFP officer.

Allan Bobbermen
QSIA President

The Queensland Government – Delivering nothing of value to industry

IT appears 2021 is no different in terms of the so-called fisheries reform process and its potential impacts for Queensland commercial fishers.

1. So-Called Reform Process

The reform process continues to throw up issues of concern. The Association has sought updates / summaries providing explanation of changes to fisheries regulation and we are still waiting for a response from Fisheries Queensland.

Issues linked to the reform process that have been pursued by the Association include Spanish Mackerel filleting at sea, the landing of catch, and interactions with the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol.

As we receive responses, we are sharing those with members or responding through social media.

2. Senate Inquiry Update

The Association provided a detailed submission to the Senate Standing Committees on Rural & Regional Affairs & Transport inquiry into the fisheries quota system. As at the time of publishing this edition of the magazine, the Committee had received 45 submissions.

You can access the Association's submission here: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Rural_and_Regional_Affairs_and_Transport/Fisheriesquota/Submissions

3. Ocean Beach Fishery WTO

The Association provided a letter supporting the development of an Ocean Beach Fishery wildlife trade operation (WTO) certification to allow for the export of mullet roe.

The target species for the Ocean Beach Fishery is mullet, which constitutes approximately 80 to 90 per cent of the retained product in the fishery.

The Association supports the need for a restart in the mullet fishery.

Our net-fishing members are disappointed that other sectors of the net fishery have not been considered or even consulted across the N1, N10 and N11 fisheries under this WTO.

This lack of consultation is typical of the lacklustre consultation approach adopted by Fisheries Queensland.

Commercial net fishers outside the Ocean Beach Fishery are also selective with their gear, which historically has proven to be efficient with minimal environmental footprint.

4. Communication with Members

Information is a key commodity and we are doing all we can to provide as much information to members as possible while engaging with a poorly designed and anti-industry reform process.

Communication channels we are using:

- We are continually updating members through the "QSIA Members Updates" emails.
- QSIA website and in particular QSIA News: <https://qsia.com.au/news/>
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/QLDSeafood>
- Queensland Catch: <https://www.facebook.com/Queensland-Catch-711613002284891>
- QSIA Podcasts: <https://qsia.podbean.com/>

Meet the QSIA Board

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the 2020 annual general meeting was held in late January 2021 in Hervey Bay.

A wide range of issues were discussed and these, along with the annual report, have been covered in the QSIA website.

There was a good attendance by members, some travelling considerable distances to attend.

Members elected a new QSIA Board of Directors. They are:

- QSIA President – Allan Bobbermen
- Vice President – Shane Snow
- Treasurer – Kevin Reibel
- Director – David Caracciolo
- Director – Tony Reisenwebber.

Eric Perez
CEO

Government to gag fishermen at industry meeting

A FISHERMEN recently sent me a letter that had been distributed to commercial net fishers in North Queensland.

Check out the photograph of the letter on the opposite page.

At first glance, the letter is just another request to meet commercial fishers but, taking some time to unpack the meeting request, you get to see the level of incompetence and disdain for industry driving Fisheries Queensland.

Issues related to the so-called reform process are at the heart of current industry concern and a source of significant stress.

Why attend this ridiculous meeting if commercial fishers cannot raise issues regarding the reform process?

The level of disregard for this industry from Fisheries Queensland and the Minister is plain to see and of course unacceptable.

Consider these serious issues.

- Why attend a meeting that restricts what can be discussed?
- Why attend a meeting when the topics are restricted to "current" fisheries issues? What could be more critical than the potential impacts of this so-called reform process?

- Restricting our ability to engage on issues we see as important restricts our freedom to think and speak, as, ultimately, we have to deal with the consequences of poor policy and legislation-making.

If you have concerns regarding the letter below, please contact:

- Craig Bambling (QBFP – Townsville District Officer) on mobile 0417 788 692 or email craig.bambling@daf.qld.gov.au; and
- Graeme Bolton (Deputy Director-General, Fisheries & Forestry), on (07) 3087 8126 or Graeme.Bolton@daf.qld.gov.au.

We have now reached the stage that Fisheries Queensland is gagging us before we get to meetings.

Eric Perez
CEO

You are invited to attend the local NET INDUSTRY MEETING

Date:	Tuesday, 25 th May 2021
Time:	10:00am
Venue:	Department of Agriculture and Fisheries Ayr Research Facility, 343 Old Clare Road, Ayr

You have been identified as having an interest in the above fishery and are invited to attend the next meeting being held in your area.

If you are currently leasing out your license, please pass this invitation onto the lessee or your skipper for their information also.

The purpose of this meeting is for you to advise us of anything that is fisheries related impacting on your business for example current fisheries legislation requirements, other fishing industry user groups, communications etc. any issues raised will be discussed, documented and communicated to management.

This meeting will not be a forum to discuss upcoming legislation changes, only those that are already in place. Those concerns can be raised directly with Fisheries Queensland at fisheriesmanagers@daf.qld.gov.au

If you are unable to attend but would still like to raise a concern, please contact us as below.

Due to COVID-19 precautions, do not attend if you are feeling unwell. There is a requirement to RSVP by 14th May 2021 if you wish to attend for this meeting as numbers may be limited.

Important quota allocation dates

THE allocation of quota and effort units for the east coast inshore, east coast trawl and crab fisheries will begin soon. Here's a reminder of some key dates still ahead of us.

16 July 2021: Trawl nominations close

If relevant, you must nominate allocation of your unused trawl effort units by this date.

21 July 2021: "Sum of" date

This is the date at which a final figure is calculated for the sum of eligible reported catch data from the whole fishery. This final figure will be used to calculate individual quota allocations.

Week commencing 2 August 2021

You will receive:

- your individual transferable quota (ITQ) allocation decision and an ITQ certificate
- if relevant, a decision or outcome regarding amended or substituted catch
- advice regarding review of a decision made by Fisheries Queensland.

Working Group members appointed

THE Queensland Government is reinstating its fisheries working groups.

Here are the industry representatives on the working groups selected by the Government.

Crab fishery working group

Anne Tooker
Benjamin Day
Matthew Vickers
Peter Jackson
Nicholas Burr
Keith Harris

East coast inshore fishery working group

Allan Bobberman
Ben Gilliland
Benjamin Coyne
Daniel Atherton
Nathan Rynn
Matt Vujica

Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fishery working group

Bruce Davey
Claudine Ward
David Wren
David Lane
Geoffrey Diver
Shane Snow
Tony Hurley

Reef line fishery working group

Chris Bolton
Jack Kingdon
Sean Stiff
Susan Davenport
Barry Dun
Michael Wakeling

Rocky reef fishery working group

Joey Meeuwsen
Michael Thompson
Scott Butterworth

Spanish mackerel fishery working group

Anthony Vass
Chris Hain
Richard Gilmore
Tony Lanzi
Gary Powis
Ryan Tully

Trawl fishery working group

Andrew Redfearn
Andrew Barr
Edward Woodham
James Newman
Jamie De Graaf
Nick Schulz
Kevin Reibel
Neil Mogensen
Richard Taylor
Scott Hodgetts
Scott McLay
Steve Murphy
Barry Ehrke

Vessel tracking working group

Mark Cook
Michelle Jensen
Darren Brighton
Bruce Batch
Jake Kingdon
James Forster
Sean Stiff
Scott Butterworth
Michael Wood
Neil Mogensen
Benjamin Day
Ross Casey
Geoffrey Diver
Eric Perez

QUOTA MANAGEMENT

Confusing issues regarding quota

There are confusing issues regarding quota and fisheries management in Queensland, especially real-time quota allocation versus “Ghost Quota”, as Shane Snow reports.

AS a commercial fisher person for all of my working life I find it difficult to understand just how this “potential draft allocation” of quota actually works so I have coined the phrase “Ghost Quota” to address some of the confusion and concerns that not only I have but also a big percentage of other fishers have as well.

I will use the mud crab fishery as an example but, more importantly, this also pertains to every fishery that is being forced into individual transferable quota (ITQ) by Fisheries Queensland (FQ).

We have been told that the total quota (ITQ) pool for the Mud Crab fishery is around 770 tonnes.

To qualify to be able to claim the catch history share (on your primary licence) of this quota pool, we must have a CI crab endorsement attached to the primary fishing licence by April 22.

Most of us know, as do FQ, that there are nowhere near enough CI endorsements to allow every primary licence with history to be able to claim their “potential allocation”. Put simply, a percentage of licences will miss out on ITQ crab allocation.

Here is an example. The total ITQ pool sits at 770 tonnes for Mud Crab. If there is 170 tonne potential quota allocation sitting on primary licences that will not have a CI endorsement on them by April 22, then the “Ghost Quota” is 170 tonnes that cannot be claimed, thus making the “real time” ITQ pool only 600 tonnes.

We (QSIA) posed the following questions to a principal fisheries manager (name withheld) on March 22:

From the total mud crab quota allocation pool of 770 tonnes as of today, how much of that pool can be claimed by primaries with a CI attached?

How many primary licences as of today that have crab history attached but are not paired with CI endorsement are able to claim that history?

How much of the 770 tonnes to be allocated is actually unclaimable?

My reading of your correspondence to commercial mud crab and net fishers is that, as of 22 April 2021, if you do not have a CI or N endorsement on a licence with history it is deemed not claimable for quota. So, does unclaimed quota go back into the pool?

We (QSIA) never got an answer to any of these very real questions that are going to affect many fishing businesses.

The only answer we got was this: “There are a number of factors that will determine the allocation of quota across the net and crab fisheries. It would be best perhaps to arrange a briefing session to explain the process. Let me know if you would like to do that.”

Well, isn't that just magical. Here we are, approximately four years into this reform / quota process and the best FQ can do to answer business-changing and life-changing questions is to “meet for a briefing session”.

If they have to meet to explain this to us now, then where has been the consultation with industry? The answer is it has been virtually non-existent and where has been the education for industry as to what is about to change some of our businesses and lives for ever?

Something worth noting: we offered the principal fisheries manager (name withheld) that sent the reply email the opportunity to speak with us on a podcast (in a safe space) to address these question and other questions regarding this reform / quota.

This is an excellent opportunity to speak to our members as well as the wider industry. To date, this offer has not been accepted. Many questions remain unanswered by FQ.

Symbol trading, history tracking

Going back to when FQ started symbol-trading within industry, the assurance was given to licence owners by a well-known senior fisheries manager (name withheld) that the history would always be tracked on the symbol.

Some operators still have that in writing from FQ and there was never any investment warning on the symbol trading.

Years later, when it was brought to the attention of the then Fisheries Minister, all of a sudden we had an investment warning come out about symbol trading.

It has become blatantly clear that FQ have done a backflip on their own policy, changing the goal posts to suit their own agenda, which will cost licence owners millions of dollars. How does this stack up in a legal case? Time will tell.

Another glaring example is in the fact of offshore boats working numerous CI endorsements on the one primary licence to be able to work up to 150 crab pots in the sand crab fishery under a general fisheries permit.

I have absolutely no issue with those boats working extra pots; what I do have an issue with is how FQ went about the process.

The original deal with FQ to allow this to happen was that three primary licences were used (all of which had to have sand crab history on them), two of which went into limbo or “no boat” status, while the three CI symbols went onto the one primary. The catch history was to be shared equally between the three primary licences.

However, it seems now that FQ have done yet another backflip there as well and left all the history-quota allocation on the one primary licence that was being used, thus making the other two making the other two primaries that went into “no boat” status worthless, with zero history allocation.

Is this fair or even legal in a court of law? Time will tell.

Another glaring example of fisheries mismanagement is the extending of the vessel size in certain quota-managed fisheries.

Boats that can and now do work any weather, never giving grounds a spell, whereas when it was capped to a lot smaller size vessel the resource got a chance to have a break when the weather was too rough to work.

This quota-managed fishery is now down below one third of the original quota holdings issued.

Rough weather in essence was a form of “natural closure”. It begs the question, is FQ genuinely wanting to preserve and enhance our resource or



"Ghost Quota" can be seen in the mud crab proposals but applies across other quota fisheries.

are they pandering to the whims of a few of the bigger players? You be the judge.

Logbook catch history

An even more concerning scenario is the fact that FQ have made the claim publicly that lies have been told in logbook reporting of catch history, which equates to an increase in potential quota allocation.

FQ know this is a problem through their own admission, yet they have

decided to "cap" each licence's maximum quota allocation to combat this problem.

Where did this advice come from? The crab working group? If so, then, what is the actual expertise of people on that working group?

Hard-working crab fishers have been penalised for the catch effort they have put into their businesses. A simple example is this: in the logbooks for the crab fishery, it asks "How many pots or

dillies are used daily and how many lifts per day?"

When crabs are on the move or feeding more frequently, some crabbers will work the morning tides and also the afternoon tides; that is, working twice a day. The catch rate obviously increases, so these crabbers are being penalised in the form of maximum "catch caps" on their logbook history simply because they have worked twice as hard as some others. Is this fair or even legal: being penalised for working hard?

I have talked to numerous crab fishers (as well as being a crabber myself) and some years, with the right wet seasons, the catch rates are at least double what the caps have been set at. So, the caps in place do nothing to reflect the true catch history of good years in the fishery.

As an example, with my crab catch history, I worked on the Queensland east coast for several years crabbing and then started working in the Gulf of Carpentaria crabbing.

My catch history has therefore been spread over six years east coast and six years in the Gulf of Carpentaria, thus calculating my total allocation over 12 years and not six because you can't



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possibly crab two places at once. Again, is this fair or even legal? Time will tell.

Fisheries Working Groups

Around 2012, and the formation of a crab working group, the entry criteria was that you had to be a working commercial fisher, own a primary licence and had to have been fishing for a minimum of seven years.

Not all applicants qualified for the entry criteria. There were applicants that never qualified who did, however, get accepted as an observer.

Now, as the crab working group meetings advanced, FQ needed to develop a framework that would validate catch history which involved the volunteering of an observer.

A grave concern I have is, did this volunteering observer have access to private and confidential logbook history? (Information supplied by a long-term industry member who was on the crab working group.)

Currently, governments and departments talk about equality and balance in the workplace. Why then is there only a couple of women on the working groups? I know it's not because of lack of applicants.

I know several women with long-term histories in industry that applied for the working groups and never succeeded. Fisheries Queensland, please explain.

Why is the seafood consumer being ignored? After all, without the seafood consumer, none of us has a market for our product. The consumer has a right to have representatives on those working groups, but no provision has been made for this. FQ, why not?

I know of numerous crab fishers with far more generational expertise that applied for the first round and also the latest round of crab working groups and were never successful. FQ, why were these people never accepted?

I still have many unanswered questions on behalf of industry for FQ. Here are just a few.

Does the unclaimable quota allocation get divided equally among the remaining quota holders?

Why is there a reluctance by FQ to answer formally by email the simple questions posed to them?

Does this "Ghost Quota" pertain to all fisheries that are being forced to ITQ? (My guess is that, yes, it is.)



Seafood consumers have been ignored when it comes to membership of fisheries working groups. Why?

If the ITQ is not caught in any given year, does this affect, or how will this affect, the current quota holdings of fishers?

Will fishers' ITQ be "dialled down" over time, as we have seen with every other ITQ fisheries? Case in point, none has ever been lifted above the original ITQ holdings, gradually eroding the fisher's ability to catch and making their business less profitable over time due to lost revenue.

What happens to the catch history of licences that did not have the relevant endorsement attached by April 22.

Dismal failures

As my personal point of view, many of us have seen and experienced dismal failures in quota fisheries both here and worldwide.

I have studied quota fisheries worldwide (far too many to count) and I can't see this rollout being any different to anywhere else. Many of the problems that exist in this framework are the same problems worldwide.

FQ has been warned by industry repeatedly about the glaring flaws in ITQ but, as usual, our concerns are not noted. To go to quota on Mud Crab is beyond belief when a huge range of issues and questions from industry seem to have been ignored by the Department. Why are our concerns being ignored?

The harvest of a single-sex species, a large part of the biomass is in undersize male and female Mud Crab, which is not being considered, the enormous fecundity (breeding rate) of Mud Crabs.

The amount of Mud Crab photos placed on social media by recreational fishers is staggering. The catch rates

of recreational fishers are increasing rapidly despite what flawed boat ramp surveys might suggest. The enormous impact that good wet seasons have on Mud Crab populations, environmental influences, etcetera.

All these factors, and there are many more, confirm the validity of the question: "Why the need to force us to ITQ?" This is our last chance to stand up to this absurd and ridiculous so-called fisheries management.

How many of you fishermen out there have been subjected to any or all of this BS coming from FQ? Stand up now, people, or be happy with whatever crumbs FQ decide to throw at you.

I have my own theories, and some might say I'm paranoid about so-called fisheries management, but I'll let you be the judge. And, as I have said before, in a court of law. Time will tell.

Footnote: This article has used the mud crab fishery as an example only. QSIA has not forgotten about all the other fisheries and commercial fishers that we have which are under the same pressures from FQ. Most of us are only too familiar with the quota management in the reef line fishery and the failure of quota management in the Spanner Crab fishery.

We are looking forward to pursuing FQ legally in a court of law and would urge anyone with any information that could help, any fishers that have been treated unfairly in the past or present or any comments on any of this, to contact our CEO, Eric Perez.

Shane Snow
QSIA Vice President

FISH MANAGEMENT

Results of QSIA questionnaire on quota impacts

DURING February and March 2021, the QSIA sought industry feedback regarding quota management and received a total of 101 responses. The results of the questionnaire are provided below.

Q.1. Will the introduction of quota management have economic impacts on your business? If "Yes", please list what you believe are the economic impacts for your business?

The Association received 99 responses to this questionnaire item. A majority (96% of respondents) indicated that the introduction of quota will have a negative economic impact on their businesses.

Response Data for Question 1

- Yes 96% (n = 95)
- No 4% (n = 4)
- No Response - (n = 2)

The second element of the question requested feedback regarding the types of economic impacts that might arise from the introduction of quota management. Amongst the commercial fishers that responded, 89 of the 95 responding "yes" provided feedback. That feedback was grouped into themes which are detailed below.

Dominant themes

- the loss of and/or insecure income
- increased business costs;
- unknown impacts of quota management in the long-term;
- shift of control from commercial fishers to 'quota barons';

- sourcing quota to lease or buy; and
- unfair quota allocation process.

Other themes

- undermining of multi-endorsed commercial fishers;
- unnecessary imitation of catch;
- reduction of commercial fishers; and
- higher seafood retail costs.

Q.2. Will the introduction of quota management have social impacts for you (e.g. on your family, on your relationships)?

Eight-six (95% of respondents) provided a response regarding the social impacts resulting from the introduction of quota management.

Response Data for Question 2

- Yes 95% (n = 86)
- No 4% (n = 4)
- Unsure 1% (n = 1)
- No Response - (n = 10)

Commercial fishers were asked for feedback and their response were grouped below.

Dominant themes

- The most cited response from commercial fishers to this questionnaire item was stress;

Specifically, commercial fishers noted the following:

- General increase in stress and family relationships;
- Additional stress as part of the reform process;

- Stress on marriage and potential for divorce;
- Impact on crew and their families;
- Increasing stress as it relates to losing income; and
- Increasing stress as it relates to leasing or buying quota.

Other themes

- Uncertainty regarding implications of quota management;
- Quota will lead to corporate or investor control over commercial fisheries; and
- Retirement insecurity as individual businesses come under threat from the introduction of quota management.

Q.3(a). Do you fully understand the quota management system? If 'No' – What are the issues you are encountering?

Ninety-nine commercial fishers provided feedback regarding their understanding of the of quota management system. Forty-one percent of commercial fishers indicated they understood the quota management system while 59% indicated that they did not understand the quota management system.

Response Data for Question 3(a)

- Yes 41% (n = 41)
- No 59% (n = 58)
- No Response - (n = 2)

Commercial fishers were asked for feedback. Forty-nine commercial fishers provided feedback and their response were grouped below.

Dominant themes

- An awareness that Fisheries Queensland has not fully explained the quota management system to industry;

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- Port visits were evaded on purpose, to avoid an open backlash from the majority of industry regarding the reform process;
- Reporting obligations;
- Concerns about the operation of quota expressed amongst crab, net and trawl commercial fishers; and
- Concerns raised regarding discards under quota management arrangements.

Other themes

- Industry has not been offered compensation;
- Lack of quota to make a sustainable living;
- Role of department in quota leasing and cost; and
- Questions regarding how quota trading will operate.

Q.3(b). Do you fully understand the regulations that support the quota management system? If 'No' – What are the issues you are encountering?

The Association received 97 responses with 33 commercial fishers (34% of respondents) indicating they fully understood quota regulation.

While 64 commercial fishers (66% of respondents) do not fully understand quota regulations.

Response Data for Question 3(b)

- Yes 34% (n = 33)
- No 66% (n = 64)
- No Response - (n = 4)

Commercial fishers were asked for feedback. Forty-two commercial fishers provided feedback and their response were grouped into themes below.

Dominant themes

- Lack of plain English explanations of regulations; and
- Lack of proper consultation.

Other themes

- The impacts of the regulations on quota lease price or purchase price are unknown;
- Limited ability to ask questions;
- Increased red tape; and
- Link between introducing quota management and protecting the fishery is unclear.

Q.4. Will zoning (regionalisation) affect your business?

The Association received 97 responses with 65 commercial fishers (67% of respondents) indicating zoning would affect their businesses. While 32 commercial fishers (33% of respondents) do not believe zoning would affect their business.

Response Data for Question 4

- Yes 67% (n = 65)
- No 33% (n = 32)
- No Response - (n = 4)

Commercial fishers were asked for feedback. Sixty commercial fishers provided feedback and their response were grouped below.

Dominant themes

- Loss of mobility between zones;
- Limited quota or access to quota on a zone-by-zone basis;
- Increase pressure on a zone-by-zone basis has not been explored; and
- Zoning will undermine multi-endorsed commercial fishers by limiting their mobility.

REEF FISHING

Trout quota to be cut by 17% for '21-22 year

IT looks like professional line fishers will take a hit of 200 tonnes in the total allowable catch (TAC) of coral trout in the 2021-22 fishing year.

My reading of the latest Fisheries Queensland communicate following a meeting of the reef line fishery working group in late April is that the TAC will be cut from the current 1,163 tonnes to 963 tonnes, a reduction of just over 17 per cent.

And it would have been cut by more than a quarter – by 300 tonnes – if fisheries managers had their way but a rule of “no more than a 200-tonne cut between seasons” saw the reduction kept to that latter figure.

But it is still a big hit for commercial fishers and marketers.

No change has been recommended to the take by recreational anglers and charter operators.

Here is the relevant passage from the communicate.

Fisheries Queensland provided a refresher on the stock assessment undertaken for common coral trout in 2020. The working group noted the stock assessment estimated the spawning biomass for common coral trout in 2019 to be 59% of unfished levels, resulting in a Total Allowable Catch (TAC) of 1,073 tonnes to rebuild the stock to 60% spawning biomass. The working group then discussed improvements to the TAC's calculation process, in particular the transparent use and application of the recommended biological catch limit from the stock assessment, discount factors to account for uncertainty and the scaling factor to calculate an “all coral trout” TAC. Based on the 2020 coral trout stock assessment, and applying the harvest strategy decision rules, a Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) of 858 tonnes was recommended, a 305-tonne reduction from the current TACC of 1,163. Fisheries Queensland advised that the harvest strategy provides a maximum change rule of 200 tonnes, resulting in a final recommended TACC of 963 tonnes for the 2021-22 fishing season.

Industry members noted concerns that the reduction in the recommended TACC comes from a new stock assessment model which shows a lower biomass estimate than the previous model and had significant concerns with the potential economic impact on quota lease price associated with large TACC changes. The working group acknowledged the deterioration in the economic conditions of the fishery

and the impost on commercial fishers imposed by a reduction in the TACC, but recognised the importance of following the harvest strategy process. The working group members supported adopting the final recommended TACC of 963 tonnes for the 2021-22 fishing season.

When you read about working group decisions, it is worth noting that there are four commercial fishers (and two marketers) on a working group of 16.

Another change on the way is the return of the obligatory pre-trip notification before commercial fishers head out. This was previously dropped when the vessel monitoring system (VMS) was introduced.

The communicate says: *Fisheries Queensland provided an update on the new standardised commercial fishing reporting requirements that will commence on 1 September 2021. The working group noted the primary change for the reef line fishery is the introduction of a pre-trip notice that is required before commencing a fishing trip.*

Fewer fish, tighter restrictions: fishing controls only ever seem to go in one direction.

Neil Green

(Neil is a net, crab and line fisherman and a former QSIA President.)

SENATE HEARING ON QUOTA

QSIA makes submission to Senate inquiry into quota

The QSIA has submitted a detailed argument against the unnecessary introduction of quota to the Senate Standing Committees on Rural & Regional Affairs & Transport inquiry into the fisheries quota system.



THE inquiry provided the Association with an opportunity to make a case against the use of quota management, its significant limitations and the cost to commercial fishers and community.

This submission provided a rationale for re-thinking the use of quota management and did so by making the following arguments.

- ❑ Under current fisheries management arrangements, Queensland commercial fisheries are sustainable. The current, so-called Queensland fisheries “reform” process has indicated that, with the introduction of quota management, the community will inherit more sustainable fisheries. This is a public policy lie.
- ❑ The incompetent fisheries management of the Queensland Spanner Crab fishery led to a 48 per cent devaluation of the fishery quota.
- ❑ Multi-endorsed commercial fishers will: (a) lose parts of their businesses forcing a decision to seek finance and increase their debt or leave the industry; and (b) government has not offered compensation for the resource reallocation that is the Queensland fisheries reform process.
- ❑ The outcomes of introducing quota-managed fisheries in Canada and Iceland provide a warning to policy-makers that quota will lead to: (a) the consolidation of businesses in the catch sector; (b) a consolidation of quota-owners leading to greater control over commercial fishers; and (c) negative impacts on local communities through the loss of employment and employers.

- ❑ Quota management is not the solution to the threats facing the marine ecology in Queensland.
- ❑ Since 1990, active commercial fisher numbers have fallen by 51 per cent to 1,364 operators working across the commercial crab, net, line and trawl fisheries. After the full implementation of the so-called Queensland fishing reforms, the Association estimates an overall reduction of 67 per cent in active commercial fishers.

The introduction of quota management is a solution to a problem that does not exist.

Queensland fisheries are in no danger of collapse yet the Queensland Government has insisted its quota management approach will ensure the longevity of the marine resource.

Alternatives to quota management were never fully explored by Fisheries Queensland. A decision by government has led to the bypassing of a regulatory impact statement (RIA).

The implications of reform for the catch sector may only be known through the use of a post-implementation assessment (PIA).

This approach has minimal industry support and is viewed as a waste of time and resources given the damage to individual commercial fishers, their families and the undermining of the sector will not be addressed.

The impacts of quota management on the post-harvest sector have received no attention under the so-called fisheries reform process. Moreover, the impact on the community in terms

of species availability and price impacts are also unknown.

This submission provided evidence that quota is not the panacea for fisheries management issues in Queensland.

The introduction of quota management fits into the current fisheries management narrative, that is:

- ❑ limiting catch for the commercial sector based on zero scientific evidence;
- ❑ redistribute the remaining catch amongst an almost unaccountable and lightly regulated recreational fishing sector; and
- ❑ fisheries policy-making that reflects the desires of environmental activist groups like WWF Australia and the Australian Marine Conservation Society.

Nothing in the so-called Queensland fisheries reform process, particularly quota management, will address the impacts of coastal and port development, modification of catchments, pollution, the introduction of organisms from shipping, the modification of tributaries or the well documented ineffectiveness of fish migration ladders in barrages and weir walls that greatly hinder the natural migration of juvenile fish species back into fresh water (the natural process).

The introduction of quota management is a smokescreen for unimaginative fisheries policy making that, when filtered, is about the politics of fishing and not the availability of local seafood to the community, food security or the viability of micro- and small commercial fishing operators.

LEGAL MATTERS

Our rights as commercial fishermen

HERE is a common question from commercial fishers: Can you legally record conversations with Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol officers?

The short answer is: yes, you can.

In Queensland, it's legal for you to record a conversation that you are a party to (recording with your mobile phone, for example).

So, what's "being a party to a conversation" mean? It means you are either the person being spoken to or you are there when another person is being spoken to – and it is obvious you are there.

You cannot, however, then publish or share that recording unless using for legal proceedings or if the other party agreed.

So, do NOT post it on any social media or start sharing it around to your mates by SMS.

An example

Take this example.

You are going about your business fishing. A QBFP Officer approaches to start talking to you (or someone else on the boat while you are there) You are allowed to legally record the entire conversation (video or audio).

You do not even have to tell them that you are doing it, but probably better that you do tell them. It of course might be really obvious if you're holding your phone in front of you. Remember, they are likely recording you too.

You can use that recording later if you disputed what QBFP said had happened, for example. If that were the case, you should consider contacting a lawyer.

Summary

So, in summary: can you start your mobile phone and record a conversation with QBFP when they are talking to you? Yes, you can. Just make sure you are a party to the conversation.

Can you post the recording on social media? No, you can't!

Asked to attend ...

If you are asked to attend a QBFP office, QBFP officers can ask you for your name and address. It is an offence not to comply, so give them your details if asked.

If QBFP officers ask the fisher to produce documents – for example licence card, logbook and sale docket – all must be produced immediately unless you have a reasonable excuse.

For something like sales docket that would not be on the boat, you would have to deliver them to their office within a reasonable time.

QBFP officers can ask the fisher to give information about a potential offence.

You have to comply unless you have a reasonable excuse. (A reasonable excuse can be that the information being sought might incriminate the fisher.)

QBFP officers can ask the fisher to stop or pull in gear or something. You have to comply unless you have a reasonable excuse. A reasonable excuse can be that there is a safety issue. The fisher would have to comply with the direction at the most practical time after the direction was given.

A QBFP officer can ask you to attend their office to "chat about an alleged offence".

You are not obligated to attend at all. Just politely decline. QBFP officers can ask the fisher to give information about a potential offence under the Act, however a reasonable excuse not to comply can be that the information being sought might incriminate the fisher.

So, if a QBFP officer is talking to you at the ramp or on your boat, be polite, give them your name and address, licence card, logbook, etcetera, let them inspect the catch, nets and other gear, but you do not have to give them any further information.

They will be recording the entire interaction with you so, often, the less that comes out of your mouth, the better, I recommend you remain calm and polite as you do not want to be hit with an Obstruction charge.

If you are asked to attend the QBFP office, ask "Why?" and then you could consider getting legal advice before you do it (or decline to do it).

Chris Thompson
Law Essentials
0409 517 587

TRAWL NEWS

Trawl assessment by Fed Govt for EPBC Act

A MESSAGE has been received from the Federal Government's Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) to say it is making an environmental assessment of the Queensland East Coast Trawl Fishery (formerly the Queensland East Coast Otter Trawl Fishery) under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999.

Export approval for the fishery expires on 31 August 2021. In April 2021, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment received an application 'Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027' from the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Fisheries.

The application has been prepared to address the Australian Government "Guidelines for the ecologically sustainable management of fisheries – 2nd edition".

The application will be used to assess the operation of the fishery for the purposes of Parts 13 and 13A of the EPBC Act.

DAWE has invited public comments on the fishery. The application can be found on the Department's website at: <https://www.environment.gov.au/marine/fisheries/qld/east-coast-trawl>

The call for public comments is open from 11 May 2021 until 15 June 2021.

Please submit your comments to:

The Director
Wildlife Trade Assessments Section
Department of Agriculture, Water,
and the Environment
GPO Box 858
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Submissions may also be emailed to sustainablefisheries@awe.gov.au

Trawl operators can contact me on 0417 631 353

Eric Perez
CEO

Richard Freeman turns photography into an art form

Richard Freeman is a Sunshine Coast spanner crab fisherman who has turned photography into an art form, capturing stunning images of life at sea. Here he explains how he captures those photographs, and why.

STILL photography from a small boat at sea can be near impossible. I heard a *National Geographic* photographer say “One of the most important rules of still photography is to keep the camera still.” I guess that is why most professional landscape photographers use tripods.

None of this is possible from a small boat, which on many a day is being tossed around like a cork in a washing machine.

Photography is difficult at sea even on the calmest of seas. Any breeze at all will carry water and spray back over the boat, not to mention the odd breaking wave crashing over the gunwale, which is why most days I need to wear my full length wet weather gear.

To combat all this movement, I always use the highest shutter speed I can help along with an ISO setting of 400.

I normally brace myself with one leg against the gunwale and the other leg against my ice box. Everything moves the boat: large ocean swells, little wind waves, as well as wind and current all combine to continuously move the boat one way or another.

The subject I am shooting is also very much on the move and in some cases, like a breaching whale, cannot be seen until it breaks the surface of the water. In the time it takes to turn and point the camera, pre-focus, and compose the shot, then allow for a little shutter lag, well, that breaching humpback is only a (big) splash.

For me, it really did take years of perseverance to capture my first whale-breaching shot. Then many more years to capture the quality shots I have now.

More than 30 years of working alone at sea with these magnificent creatures has enabled me to understand some

of their ways and given me the ability to predict their moves or flight paths, which is an unbelievable advantage as a photographer.

Time and time again, I have been able to predict to within a few seconds just when that magnificent humpback whale will burst out of the water to capture that incredible breach shot.

Once, when I was photographing a giant petrel, taking advantage of the lovely early morning light, he decided to paddle away from me and I quietly said: “Where are you going? I’m not finished shooting yet.” He turned around and paddled back to me. Moments like this are feel-good moments and leave me with a marvellous warm feeling inside.

Indeed, the most heart-warming thing I find is that all these amazing creatures come to me. Sure, some hope to score fish scraps around fishing boats, but many, like whales, appear to just enjoy the company.

Then there are the darling tiny storm petrels whose flight is quick and most erratic as they daintily dart and dance while disappearing and reappearing between the waves, providing a real challenge just to keeping them in the view finder.

Of all the creatures that visit me out



Richard Freeman heading to sea in his beloved 5.6-metre Shark Cat.

at sea, those spectacular humpback whales have to be the grandest of all.

I have had such incredibly close encounters, where whales will swim past inches from my boat and may even stay with me while I'm winching a whole string of dillies.

Occasionally, a whole pod of whales may befriend me, staying with me for quite some time and repeatedly swim close enough to gently scrap the boat, turn around and make another leisurely pass – in fact, so close that they will pass their tail over my bow rail while I'm working.

It is just heart thumping breathtakingly awesome to be so close to such a massive and magnificent creature. Humpback whales appear to be quite oblivious of the law which states that we should stay at least 100 metres clear of each other! But, when you are as big as a humpback whale, who is going to argue with you?

Other encounters can be quite tranquil and enchanting. Reminiscent of the morning I had set my first shot, the air had a little chill to it and I was quietly sitting down enjoying a hot cup of tea from my thermos and watching a beautiful sunrise over a calm sea with just ocean on the horizon all round, when I realised that the tune I could hear percolating through the bottom of my boat was a nearby submerged whale singing his song. A serene alone-at-sea moment like this gives one great joy and I am overwhelmed with a "Life is good and I wouldn't be dead for quids" sensation.

Then again, a massive humpback the size of a bus may unexpectedly burst out of the water so close to completely fill my field of vision and I stand there dumbfounded, with eyes as wide as saucers, and think "Wow!"

Occasionally, a whale will breach very high and fully clear of the water. Looking up skyward at a fully grown 30-tonne or more humpback whale out of the water and up close is surely one of the most breathtaking and awesome sights on this planet.

Many a day I take gigabytes of shots only to download them at home that night to find that I have very few keepers and no magic shots at all. But it doesn't matter if I have no keepers, because I'm back out again next day trying again for that magic shot all over again.

Actually, those truly "magic" shots are normally few and far apart. The shots I have displayed on my website are the result of thousands of work



Weather



Gannet



Dolphin



Humpback whale



Portuguese man of war



Yellow-nosed albatross

days from sun up to sun down with the camera always at my side.

My skills at panning, pre-focusing and composing a shot have become better over the years and I am truly amazed at the success I have had. However capturing that magic shot is still much about just getting lucky and only a little to do with skill.

In 2005, I entered my first photography contest, the Sunshine Coast Show. To my amazement, I not only won the category I entered but was awarded the outright "Champion Print". I found the time to enter this show again the following year and was a bit overwhelmed to be awarded outright "Champion Print" again in 2006. I have won several other local photo contests.

My images have been used by a range of organisations, including the Australian Defence Force to promote recruitment, the federal Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population & Communities to promote marine protection areas, the Queensland Department of Primary Industries, the Queensland Museum and the Queensland Boating & Fisheries Patrol, as well as seafood processors to promote seafood.

My current camera is a DSLR Pentax K5 II, which I chose for all of its weather-proofing seals.

I keep it beside me in a waterproof Pelican case and can have it out of the case, turned on and in my hands in only a few seconds (which is still too slow for many of the things I see).

My camera cops a real hiding while at sea, I never have time to dry my hands, because if I did I would probably miss that shot.

After each shooting session, the camera goes back into its case, salty-wet, along with a bit of bait and a couple of fish scales it has collected from my hands. The Pelican case itself is often awash with salt water as it rests on the floor of my open Shark Cat.

When I have a few days at home, I wipe the camera over and spray it with silicone spray and clean the lens and it goes back into the Pelican case looking deceptively like new but, funny thing is, it still has a fishy smell to it.

Note: To see more of Richard Freeman's photographs, go to his website: <http://aloneatseaphotography.com.au/8229> (Richard no longer sells prints but they are still there to enjoy on your screen.)

WHITE SPOT DISEASE

White spot disease established in the wild

White spot disease is now established in the wild and authorities have given up hope of eradicating it.

THIS is a major development with likely very costly impacts on prawn trawl operators, prawn farmers and the natural environment.

Authorities were previously trying to eradicate the disease but now will likely move instead to just trying to contain and control it.

White spot disease could kill large numbers of crustaceans, especially wild prawns and yabbies, and threaten the economic viability of prawn farms.

Over time, it could cause losses totalling billions of dollars in lost seafood production round Australia, both in losses of wild catch and farm prawns, and the economic setbacks of planned large prawn farms not being developed in Queensland and other States and the Northern Territory.

Losses already incurred by just the prawn farms in the Logan River area have been put at approaching \$100 million – plus the potential permanent loss of about 120 jobs.

With white spot disease (WSD) now established in the wild, it can be expected to spread outside the current impacted area in and around Moreton Bay.

In the same way it has already spread (at least 70km) beyond the initial 2016 outbreak site in the Logan River on the northern Gold Coast, it is likely to continue spreading naturally in crustacean populations further along the Queensland and New South Wales coasts. Although no media release has been sighted, Queensland Agriculture & Fisheries Minister Mark Furner has reportedly told the ABC that WSD is now endemic.

Mr Furner was reported by the ABC as saying the national Aquatic Consultative Committee on Emergency Animal Disease had declared the disease as “established in the wild”.

The new classification means efforts will no longer be focused on eradicating the virus but instead on containing and controlling it within the movement restricted zone.

Areas of Moreton Bay stretching from Caloundra on the Sunshine Coast, to the New South Wales border and

west to Ipswich, have been declared as “containment zones”.

“Anywhere in the world where there is white spot, there has been no cases where there’s been an ability to eradicate it,” Mr Furner told ABC Radio Brisbane.

“The best thing we can do, and my Department, Biosecurity Queensland, does extremely well, is containment.”

Mr Furner urged Queenslanders

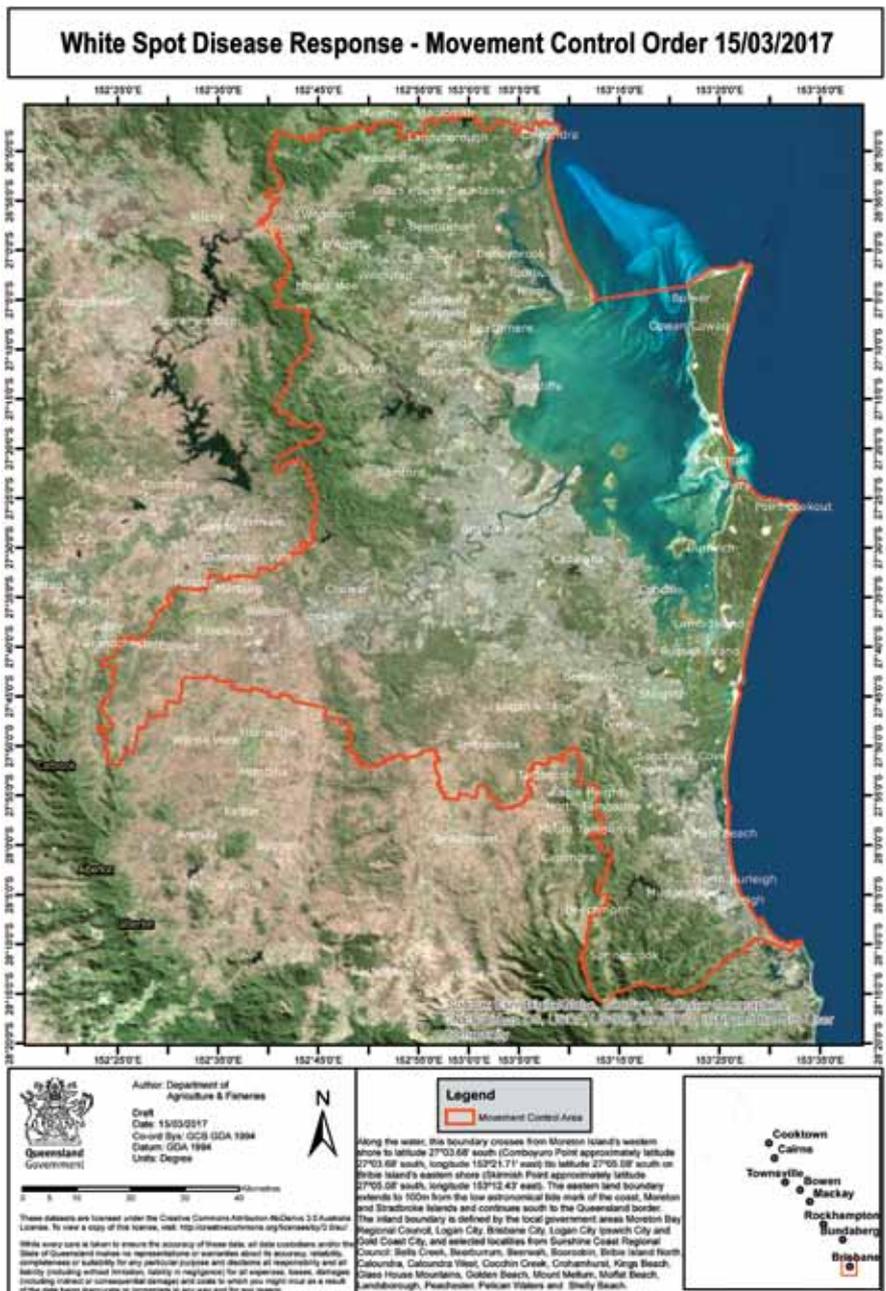
to buy local prawns and to never use prawns bought at a supermarket as bait.

In 2017, the then Inspector-General of Biosecurity said imported, uncooked prawns — used as fishing bait in the Logan River — were the suspected source of the outbreak.

Prawn farmers devastated

Australian Prawn Farmers Association executive officer Kim Hooper told the ABC only three of the impacted Logan prawn farms had returned to operation since the first outbreak ravaged the local industry in 2016.

Local farmers and the aquaculture industry have suffered the impacts of the outbreak.



With white spot disease established in the wild, containment in SEQ is apparently the best authorities are hoping for.



The characteristic white spots that give this fatal-to-prawns disease its name.

The disease was last detected locally in April at two prawn farms on the Logan River, as well as in wild prawns and crabs caught in Moreton Bay.

Ms Hooper said the news was something the industry “never wanted to hear”.

“The rest of Australia is white spot free and we cannot let it out of the restricted area, which means that the current movement restrictions must remain,” she said.

Ms Hooper said the change in strategy would require an increased biosecurity effort and further costs to farmers to operate safely.

“It is really heartbreaking because we’ve been warning the Federal Government for years about the importation of products that have white spot and other diseases, as far back as 2009,” she said.

“In the first major incursion in Logan in 2016 and 2017, we saw animals eradicated, which was heartbreaking and livelihoods were destroyed.

“Hopefully, in the next couple of years, it will die out if it can, but otherwise we cannot let it out of that area.

“We need both the State Government and Federal Government to support biosecurity and surveillance, especially the Federal Government with biosecurity at the border.

“We want Australians to continue to enjoy the iconic Aussie prawn.” Departmental statement

The federal Department of Agriculture, Water & Environment (AWE) issued a statement saying it is committed to the management of biosecurity risks associated with imported goods.

“Import conditions for uncooked prawns were suspended for six months

following the white spot disease outbreak in Queensland in December 2016,” the Department of AWE said.

DAWE said conditions were further strengthened in July 2017 when trade resumed, and again in September 2018 and July 2020.

The Department is undertaking a review of penalties and approved arrangements for biosecurity border control breaches, which it said is expected to be finalised by early 2022.

It said DAWE is constantly reviewing penalties to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

Self-evidently, the Department’s steps were far too late and far too little. Minister’s intervention

Certainly, Federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud finds his Department’s performance less than awe-inspiring, having now set up an independent expert panel to investigate their actions. (See separate article.)

Mr Littleproud told the media

QSIA supports cooking of imported prawn

THE QSIA has told a Federal Government review of the biosecurity risks of imported prawns that it believes that only cooked prawns should be allowed to be imported.

The QSIA has made a lengthy submission to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment review.

“Queensland and national prawn fisheries deserve a better import risk assessment framework,” the QSIA submission said.

“Queensland commercial fishers have had to endure the impacts of white spot syndrome virus (WSSV)

conference that he has “enough common sense to be concerned” about what his department has done.

“We’ve got to put our hand up. The Department’s made a blue and we’ve had an incursion (of WSD disease into Australia) and my job is to make sure they’re doing the regulatory piece right and I don’t have that confidence at the moment.”

The Minister said he wants his Department “challenged”.

“I want them challenged. They’re not above reproach. They have made errors in the past.

“They’re not malicious errors, they’re just human errors that have happened that I’ve got to try and eliminate.

“It’s for that reason exactly that I want this independent panel to go through their body of work and make sure that we can give industry confidence, and me confidence, that they put the right parameters in place.”

Note: White spot disease (WSD) does not affect humans but is highly contagious and deadly for prawns, crabs and yabbies. (Worms are also affected.) WSD is common in Asia, North America and South America and was found in seven prawn farms in the Logan River area in Australia’s first known outbreak in 2016. In response, the Queensland Government established a restricted movement area in the Moreton Bay region to try to stop the spread of the disease via the sale of untreated prawns and other crustaceans outside the zone.

incursion and, based on industry and expert feedback, the situation could have been avoided.

“The Association strongly supports the following recommendation: Cooking of imported prawns is now the only risk mitigation measure that is consistent with arrangements already in place in Moreton Bay and widely enforced for domestically produced wild-harvested prawns originating from regions where WSSV occurs.

“We expect the Federal Government to protect national industries and current import risk assessment arrangements are not acceptable and need to change.”

The submission can be found at https://qsia.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/QSIA-Submission_14-Jan-2021.pdf

Ag Minister sets up independent WSD investigation

FEDERAL Agriculture Minister David Littleproud has called in independent investigators to examine his Department's handling of white spot disease, acknowledging the seafood industry has lost confidence in his bureaucrats.

Mr Littleproud announced a scientific advisory group will independently evaluate how the Department has assessed the biosecurity risks posed by imported raw prawns.

He said that protecting the health of Australia's \$3.4-billion seafood industry was a top priority for the government.

"Imported raw and uncooked seafood can bring in a range of pests and diseases of biosecurity concern such as white spot syndrome virus and the Government is fully committed to protecting our industries from these critical threats," Mr Littleproud said.

"Given that white spot has entered Australia previously and continues to cause disruption to Moreton Bay seafood farmers and fishers, the seafood industry must have complete confidence that we have the best possible import requirements in place.

"As Minister, I want to provide them with that confidence.

"The independent panel of scientific and technical experts will evaluate whether the conclusions of the review of prawn and prawn products that is currently underway, will protect Australia from the threat of white spot syndrome virus and other significant known and emerging diseases.

"They will provide their report to the Director of Biosecurity.

"The panel will include individuals with expertise in biosecurity, economic assessment, risk analysis, as well as aquatic animal diseases.

"Australia's enviable biosecurity status underpins our international agricultural trade, however we cannot be complacent when it comes to protecting the health of our food and fibre industries."

Visit awe.gov.au for more information on current import conditions for uncooked prawns and other prawn products for human consumption and the review of prawns and prawn products.

Prawn farm takes Federal Govt to court over WSD

IT has been reported that a Gold Coast prawn farm operator is taking the Federal Government to court over white spot disease.

ABC Rural has reported that Gold Coast Tiger Prawns, which trades as Gold Coast Marine Aquaculture (GCMA), has launched a multi-million dollar lawsuit against the Federal Government and three seafood companies.

"A 94-page statement of claim blames lax biosecurity measures for more than \$41 million in estimated losses to GCMA by 2030," the report says.

"The exact source of the incursion has not been proven with 100 per cent certainty, but experts agree the most likely cause is the widespread

use of white-spot-infected imported supermarket prawns as bait or burley by recreational fishers in Moreton Bay.

"The award-winning prawn farm claims that the incursion delayed expansion plans and slowed operations.

"It was the first company in Australia to start breeding prawns, rather than just relying on wild-caught stock and those valuable brood stock genetics were lost.

"The outbreak first started killing prawns at a farm five kilometres upstream in the Logan River, which Gold Coast Tiger Prawns draws its water from.

"GCMA alleges that, had the Government warned them about the potential for a white-spot outbreak, they could have increased their own biosecurity measures, closing the inlet from the Logan River to the farm and leaving prawn ponds empty after the 2016 harvest."



Prawn farmers along the Logan River suffered serious losses when white spot disease was detected there.

WHITE SPOT DISEASE

White spot disease class action – it's happening!

By Chris Thompson
Law Essentials

IT'S taken about five years to become reality, however the White Spot Disease (WSD) Class Action is finally happening!

There was a mountain of due diligence to work up to present to litigation funding companies to show them that this case is worth funding.

Now the seafood industry can take on the Commonwealth Government for losses the seafood industry have suffered (and will continue to suffer) in relation to alleged biosecurity breaches at the border which allowed WSD to enter Australia and ultimately the pristine waters in and around Moreton Bay.

The Team

We are pleased to confirm that Omni Bridgeway (OMNI) has taken the funding of the case on. OMNI is a global leader in litigation funding operations spanning Asia, Australia, Canada, Europe, the Middle East, the UK and the US.

So, that means the case will be fully funded, with claimants not having to put their hands in their pockets at all to take on the Commonwealth Government. Funding like this puts the average claimant on an even playing field in an otherwise "David and Goliath" type battle.

The "muscle" who will run the legal case is global law firm Clyde & Co (CLYDES). Maurice Thompson is a partner at CLYDES and is the lead lawyer.

CLYDES also have skin in the game by risking 25 per cent of their fees (they lose that if the case fails), which further shows the faith that the case against the Government is strong.

Then there is little old Law Essentials. We have been helping the seafood industry for around 20 years and have helped get this case across the line with funding and the legal team.

We will be assisting OMNI and CLYDES with claimants to sign up to the WSD Class Action and also take statements and provide (fishing-related) technical assistance.

By the way, Maurice Thompson is my older brother and is currently also the lead lawyer in the Gladstone Port Dredging Class action, which Law Essentials is involved with, so he and his team have plenty of seafood industry experience under their belts.

That, coupled with Michael Garrahy and myself: it's a strong combination that understands the seafood industry and how it all fits together.

Without the three parties above, this case would be dead in the water – it's as simple as that!

What's the case about?

It is anticipated that there will be two claims made against the Commonwealth Government, being:

- ❑ a negligence claim, alleging that the Government's inspectors negligently failed to conduct adequate inspections of prawn imports that were required of them under the approved inspection regime; and
- ❑ a public nuisance claim, alleging that the Government failed to stop the escape of WSD from the quarantine facilities at the Australian border.

Who is eligible to become a claimant?

If you are in any of the following categories and have suffered loss due to WSD, you may be eligible to participate in the Class Action:

- i. commercial prawn importers;
- ii. commercial prawn farmers;
- iii. commercial fishers (owners, lessees, skippers, deckies);
- iv. commercial wholesalers;
- v. commercial processors; and/or
- vi. other allied businesses connected with the above.

You don't even have to be still operating. You may have sold your licence after WSD was introduced or you might have closed down your business altogether – you may still be eligible.

How to join the class action

Many readers of this article would have already received the relevant



documentation from me in order to sign up, including the Product Disclosure Statement for the class action (PDS) and Clyde & Co's Conditional Costs Agreement.

The PDS contains further information relating to the class action and should be read by those interested in becoming a member.

For those that have not received the relevant documentation from me, then the easiest way to join is to contact me by email chris@lawessentials.net.au or by phone 07 4197 5600. I will then provide you with the documentation and instructions how to sign up.

Please note there is a deadline of 30 June 2021 and applications need to be submitted before this date to join the class action.

Applications to participate will only be accepted on the application form contained in or accompanying the PDS. You should consider, with or without the assistance of your professional advisers, whether or not to participate.

This is a "closed class" class action, which simply means: if you do not sign up with the relevant documentation, then you will not be part of the class action.

If you are reading this and you are going to sign up, please ask people in any of your networks if they have signed also; if they haven't, then get them to contact me for more details.

Chris Thompson
Director / Solicitor
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RESTRICTIONS ON FISHERMEN

Limits on landing places add to fishermen's costs

The cost burdens being placed on fishermen by unnecessary changes to fishing rules and regulations are highlighted by the looming restrictions on places where product can be landed, which will mean tens of thousands of dollars in extra expenses for some operators

COMMERCIAL fishers in Queensland are facing serious extra restrictions on where product can be landed.

From 1 September 2021, commercial fishers will not be able to land at a private landing location unless it is:

- a public place; or
- a place, other than a public place, that is used for trade or commerce but is not a residence.

Let's have a look and see what impact this might have on Queensland east coast based inshore commercial fishers.

Month	2 trips / day * 20 days	1 trip / day * 20 days	Fuel and Operating Costs
	Fuel and costs \$50 / hour * 6 hrs	Fuel and costs \$50 / hour * 6 hrs	
May	12,000		12,000
June		6,000	
July		6,000	
August		6,000	
September		6,000	
October		6,000	
November		6,000	
December		6,000	
January		6,000	
February		6,000	
March		6,000	66,000
April	Total financial impact		\$78,000

Table 1. Unloading catch at Location A.

Month	3 trips / day * 20 days	1 trip / day * 20 days	Fuel and Operating Costs
	Fuel and costs \$50 / hour * 1 hr	Fuel and costs \$50 / hour * 1 hr	
May	3,000		3,000
June		1,000	
July		1,000	
August		1,000	
September		1,000	
October		1,000	
November		1,000	
December		1,000	
January		1,000	
February		1,000	
March		1,000	11,000
April	Total financial impact		\$14,000

Table 2. Unloading catch at Location B.

Unloading product at a privately owned wharf facility

This scenario is based on the activities of a real-life commercial fisher, who has previously been unloading at a privately-owned wharf facility.

Increased time on the water is an extra six hours per trip. Between May and September each year is a busy period. Over four weeks (between May and September), the commercial fisher may make three trips per day working from his current location.

Under the new regulations, and with an additional six hours' travel under this scenario, he would be restricted to two trips per day. For the purposes of this example, we will choose May as the month in which the four-week period of increased work takes place. The remaining seven months of operations would see a massive increase fuel and operating costs as outlined below.

Second scenario

Let's take a look at a second scenario, again based on an east coast fisherman landing product a privately-owned wharf facility.

Increased time on the water is an extra one hour per trip. Between May and September each year is a busy period. Over four weeks (between May and September), the commercial fisher may make three trips a day working from his current location.

Under the new regulations, and with an additional hour's travel under this scenario, he would still be able to undertake three trips a day. For the purposes of this example, we will choose May as the month in which the four-week period of increased work takes place. The remaining seven months of operations would see a massive increase fuel and operating costs as outlined below.

Impacts on fishermen

The commercial fishers under these two scenarios are faced with increased fuel and operating costs that will range anywhere between \$14,000 and \$78,000 to continue to operate as a result of the regulation.

To unload at a public boat ramp is not possible as the commercial fisher's vessel is longer than nine meters. Moreover, there may be vessel damage due to shallow water and tidal movement. (Most public boat ramps are designed for smaller vessels.)

And don't forget the impossibility to unload at a boat ramp due to the height of the vessel.

Month	1 trip / day * 20 days Fuel and costs \$100/hour *5- 6 hrs	Fuel and Operating Costs
February	10,000-12,000	
March	10,000-12,000	
April	10,000-12,000	
May	10,000-12,000	
June	10,000-12,000	
July	10,000-12,000	
August	10,000-12,000	
September	10,000-12,000	
October	10,000-12,000	
November	10,000-12,000	
December	10,000-12,000	
		\$90,000-\$108,000
Total financial impact		\$90,000-\$108,000

Table 3. Unloading catch at alternate location.

Costs to consider include wharf unload fees, plus security at the unload facility and surrounds.

There are potential impacts on trade: some infrastructure owners will stipulate that if you unload on their wharf you must sell to them.

The commercial fisher would have to curtail his operations as the operating hours of available wharves are not open at times outside normal trading hours.

Increase in time off the water includes unload time and the potential to impact other users of wharf facilities.

There are potential occupational health and safety impacts for the commercial fisher. Lack of sleep and stress would no doubt have severe physical effects such as fatigue.

Nth Qld operator

Now, let's look at a scenario based on the potential impacts on a northern Queensland inshore commercial fisher.

Increased time on the water is an extra five to six hours for every trip. The commercial fisher in this scenario works in an inshore fishery in a remote location.

Impacts

The commercial fisher under this scenario is faced with increased fuel and operating costs that will range anywhere between \$90,000 and \$108,000 to continue to operate as a result of the regulation.

This increase will cripple a viable commercial fishing business.

The only unload facility is difficult to access in bad weather.

The increase in travel time will mean moving between smooth and open

waters creating a health and safety issue for the commercial fisher.

An additional and not insignificant cost will be the expenditure of \$30,000 in value adding infrastructure (\$22,000 for a freezer room and \$8,000 for a processing room).

This investment has added at least \$40,000 in additional income to the business that will be lost if this regulation is implemented.

This commercial also noted that local operators have invested in upgrading facilities (as describe above) and vehicles like forklifts to allow for more timely distribution of product direct to Brisbane seafood buyers.

Note: I would like to thank Neil Green and David Perkins for their time in helping put this article together. You can listen to Neil and David discussing the potential impacts of these new restrictions in a QSIA podcast available via our website: 29 April Product_Landing Product

Eric Perez
CEO

LAW essentials

Hot Issues

- 1. WHITE SPOT DISEASE – CLASS ACTION IS UNDERWAY**
NO WIN NO FEE – sign up if you want your claim advanced. This is open to owners of licences, lessees, skippers, deckies and any onshore businesses impacted by White Spot. There is a deadline to sign up, so you need to decide quickly if you want to join.
- 2. FISHERIES REFORM QUOTA ALLOCATIONS** – We can assist with the Internal Review process and also the QCAT Appeals process.
Don't go it alone!
- 3. GLADSTONE PORT DREDGING** – Class Action
The Class Action is well underway in the Rockhampton Supreme Court. If you want to have your claim advanced and have not signed up, you need to act immediately!

FREE LEGAL ADVICE FOR FIRST CONSULTATION – JUST CALL 0409 517 587

- (i) Court Appearances – If visited by Fisheries, call us 7 days a week for a free chat
- (ii) Share Fishing Agreements
- (iii) Buy/Sell or Leasing - Boat/Licence/Quota
- (iv) Family Law, Conveyancing, Wills/Estates, Business Law.

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MONEY MATTERS

Federal Budget looks to kick-start investment

TAX write-off of the full value of asset purchases for businesses is one of the features of the 2021 Federal Budget, delivered by Treasurer Josh Frydenberg on May 11. The Treasurer said this was designed to kickstart investment and create new jobs.

“Eight out of every 10 jobs in Australia are in the private sector,” Mr Frydenberg said. “It is the engine of the Australian economy. It needs a kick-start. “Building on the successful expansion of the Instant Asset Write Off during the COVID crisis, tonight we go further, announcing the largest set of investment incentives any Australian Government has ever provided.

“From tonight, over 99 per cent of businesses will be able to write off the full value of any eligible asset they purchase for their business.

“This will be available for small, medium and larger businesses with a turnover of up to \$5 billion until June 2022.

“It is a game changer. It will unlock investment. It will dramatically expand the productive capacity of the nation and create tens of thousands of jobs.

“A trucking company will be able to upgrade its fleet, a farmer will be able to purchase a new harvester and a food manufacturing business will be able to expand its production line.

“This will boost the order books of the nation. Small businesses will buy, sell, deliver, install, and service these purchases. Every sector of our economy, every corner of our country, will benefit. This is how we will get Australians back to work.”

The Treasurer also changes to the treatment of business losses.

“Through no fault of their own, millions of small and medium sized businesses have faced lockdowns and restrictions that have severely impacted their ability to trade,” he said.

“COVID-19 has turned fundamentally sound businesses into loss making businesses. Normally, businesses would have to return to profit before they can use these losses. But these are not normal times.



Federal Treasurer Josh Frydenberg.

“In order to keep their workers, these businesses need our help now. They cannot wait years for the tax system to catch up.

“So, tonight I am announcing companies that have been doing it tough throughout this crisis will be able to use their losses earlier.

“Losses incurred to June 2022 can be offset against prior profits made in or after the 2018/19 financial year. “The combination of the immediate expensing and loss carry-back measures will create an additional 50,000 jobs across the country. “Together with our reforms to insolvency and the provision of credit, we are giving Australian businesses their best chance to succeed and keep more people in work.”

Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud said investment in priority areas, particularly biosecurity, will give farmers, fishers and foresters the confidence to invest and take advantage of opportunities going forward.

“Our \$400 million biosecurity investment in this budget comes on top of the Government’s record spending on biosecurity and export services, \$888.2 million in 2020-21.

“This funding will boost our frontline people and resources, strengthen our partnerships with industry and the community, and modernise our ICT systems, technology and data analytics to better target risk and speed up clearance times.”

Mr Littleproud said, through targeted investments across the Ag2030 themes, the Federal Government is backing farmers, fishers and foresters and the regional communities they support. “

For full information on the 2021 Budget, go to: <https://budget.gov.au/>

FISH MANAGEMENT

Delay to WTO for current beach fishing season

AS at May 14, no Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) approval has been received for the current ocean beach fishery season.

I have contacted the office of Federal Environment Minister Sussan Ley and received the following response:

- ❑ On 30 September 2020, the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Sussan Ley, revoked the export approval for the Queensland East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery (ECIFFF) due to failure of the Queensland Government to meet conditions of the export approval under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act (the EPBC Act).
 - ❑ The Queensland Government applied for separate assessment of the Ocean Beach Fishery, a component of ECIFFF, in February 2021.
 - ❑ Assessment and approval of a fishery normally takes three to four months, which includes a statutory public comment period of 20 business days.
 - ❑ An approval can only be made if the arrangements put in place by the Queensland Government meet all the requirements of the EPBC Act and sustainable fisheries guidelines.
 - ❑ The application was not received from Queensland in time for the assessment to be finalised prior to the commencement of the fishing season of 1 April 2021.
 - ❑ The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment has prioritised the assessment of the Ocean Beach Fishery for export approval.
 - ❑ A lack of export approval (because of revocation or lapse or otherwise) does not prevent fishing, and fishers can continue to sell their product domestically.
- I understand Minister Ley’s office is trying to move through the assessment process as quickly as possible.

The only reason we have this scenario is a direct result of the incompetence of the Queensland Government.

If you have any questions, please contact me on 0417 631 353.

Eric Perez
CEO

\$20 million to “revolutionise” federal fisheries

THE Federal Government will inject \$20 million into leading-edge data integration, monitoring and artificial intelligence.

Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud said recently this will reduce regulatory burden, increase productivity, support new export opportunities and improve environmental outcomes for Commonwealth fishers.

“The \$9.95-million E-Fish initiative and the \$10.1-million E-Monitoring program will boost innovation and lower compliance costs for hundreds of Commonwealth fishers,” Mr Littleproud said.

“Leading-edge, fit-for-purpose data systems will deliver cheaper and more efficient services to commercial fishers.

“Australian fishers work hard to ensure they fish within catch limits and environmental standards that are now amongst the best in the world.

“The E-Fish initiative we are announcing today will streamline and integrate that data and its collection to increase flexibility for operators and reduce the costs of administration.

“The E-Monitoring program will improve and expand the existing Commonwealth electronic monitoring into additional Commonwealth fisheries.”

Assistant Minister for Forestry & Fisheries Jonno Duniam said this was the most significant update for Australian fishers since the early 2000s, when they began transitioning from paper records to digital.

“Commonwealth fisheries have a proud history of developing and delivering new technologies that keep them at the forefront of the world’s best fishing practices, and the E-Fish and E-Monitoring initiatives continue this work,” Senator Duniam said.

“This will be the most ambitious, advantageous and forward-leaning information management upgrade across the fisheries industry in decades, and will future-proof it for decades to come.

“E-Fish will make it easier for industry to meet traceability and provenance requirements, meaning more reliable



Federal Minister for Agriculture David Littleproud.

access to a wider range of markets and new export opportunities.

“E-Monitoring will deliver a cost-effective, streamlined, simplified and faster approach to vessel management and reporting, that will save fishers time and money.”

Assistant Minister to the Prime Minister & Cabinet Ben Morton said that outdated, slow and costly technologies will be replaced for more than 1,300 fishing-related businesses Australia-wide.

“Moving to an integrated electronic system and providing the Australian Fisheries Management Authority’s regulatory service functions digitally will drive the Australian Government deregulation agenda, leveraging the latest technologies to reduce the regulatory burden placed on Commonwealth and Torres Strait fishers,” he said.

“Rapid access to information on fishing activities will also give fishers the data they need to plan their fishing and marketing operations more efficiently, while avoiding bycatch and protected species, minimising environmental impacts and supporting market access.”

The Ministers said that, across the country, around 1,360 fishing related businesses will benefit from E-Fish and E-Monitoring.

These will include: 58 in Western Australia; 216 in Victoria; 129 in Tasmania; 127 in South Australia; 158 in New South Wales; 672 in Queensland; six in the Northern Territory; and three in the Australian Capital Territory.

They said these two measures are part of a Federal Government \$120-million package to reduce red tape and regulatory burden across the Australian economy.

Queensland Catch E-News

QSI’s latest initiative for the seafood industry, the *Queensland Catch E-News*, was launched on 4 May 2021.

With the slogan of “connecting seafood businesses”, the electronic and digital advertising newsletter aims to provide an efficient and timely engagement process between fishers, their families and networks to connect with regional providers of goods and services.

E-News is not just for “fishing businesses”: it is ideal for any level of business to advertise directly to connect with the State’s seafood industry from the Gold Coast to the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The Board would like to thank Elaine Lewthwaite for her development of *E-News* and growing the reach of *Queensland Catch* across the community. *E-News* is ideally positioned for future engagement with the wider community on our favourite food – *Queensland Catch* – true local seafood.

For more information on how to advertise, contact the office for a prospectus at eo@qsi.com.au, visit the website at <https://qsi.com.au/qsi-media/> or follow *E-News* via the *Queensland Catch* Facebook page.

Eric Perez
CEO



Connecting seafood industry businesses

Issue 1 - May 2021

Contact the office at eo@qsi.com.au | www.qsi.com.au

We lose a legend: farewell to Denis O'Connell

The Queensland seafood industry has lost a legend – and one of its most charming ambassadors – with the passing of Denis O'Connell. Denis spent most of his 86 years working as an inshore fisherman on the Gold Coast, especially netting the ocean beaches for mullet and the Southport Broadwater for whiting. In 2012, Denis explained in this magazine his family's history in commercial fishing dating back to the mid-1800s and his passion for the organisation that became the Queensland Seafood Industry Association. That article neatly sums up who he was and what he did for our industry and our organisation, and is appropriate to reprint at this time. So, in his own words, here is the story of Denis O'Connell.

IN 1913, an organisation was formed to represent professional fishermen in this State: the Queensland Professional Fishermen's Association (QPFA).

So, next year will see the centenary of professional fishermen's representation in our State, a role the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) has inherited.

I earnestly hope my fellow fishermen will support the continuation of the QSIA so indeed we can celebrate this historic anniversary.

Fishermen throughout Queensland today still need a Statewide industry body to give them a strong, united voice in dealing with governments and with competing interests.

This is something fishermen in fragmented local bodies recognised 50 years ago, when it became clear that a Statewide organisation representing all the catching sectors of the industry should be considered.

Having fragmented organisations with piecemeal representation wasn't getting the industry anywhere.

In 1965, initial proposals presented to the Queensland Government were deemed unacceptable. At the time, the Queensland Professional Fishermen's League, which promoted the proposal, represented most fishermen.

Fortunately, all organisations up and down the coast (and there were lots) eventually recognised the power of having one strong body and, in 1972, as a result of a petition to the State Government, a provisional council was formed.

On 12 January 1974, the Queensland Commercial Fishermen's Organisation (QCFO) was officially gazetted. The organisation was a pyramid type, with

26 branches, five district councils and a State Council of 10 members.

A Statewide conference of all branches was called in 1977 and again in 1978 to approve setting up a 26-man State Council.

As Chairman of the QCFO, I chaired the 1978 conference and remember the enthusiasm and support for the new structure, officially adopted in 1980.

Together with the establishment of a President, Board, CEO, qualified project officers, office staff and committees representing all sectors of the fishing industry, it was the perfect structure for the industry at that time — but it came at a high cost.

One of the major costs was meeting the travel and out-of-pocket expenses of so many representatives having to travel such vast distances up and down the State.

I remember vividly the turmoil and resistance to the introduction of compulsory membership. For anyone who thinks things might be tough and fishermen's reps are copping some criticism now, bear in mind in those days we had more than just harsh words to worry about: as Chairman at the time, I was given police protection.

The resistance to compulsory membership was severe but not from all members and it was generally accepted that compulsory memberships, and compulsory fees, were necessary and essential at the time. Other primary producer bodies also had compulsory membership.

By then, there were dark clouds on the horizon for our industry, with Federal and State Government departments flexing their muscles, the green movement building momentum, and politics entering the resource debate, etcetera.

Of course, what were then clouds on the horizon are now right overhead, and life these days is pretty turbulent for fishermen most of the time. Having a strong and united industry body is more important than ever.

More support from within the



Denis with the love of his life, wife of 65 years Lorraine (at the 2019 Hervey Bay Seafood Festival). Denis is survived by Lorraine, daughter Suzanne and son Greg.



Denis O'Connell (with badges belonging to his grandfather Jim O'Connell dating back to the founding of the Queensland Professional Fishermen's Association in 1913).

industry will give more security to the organisation's ability — and in turn our industry's ability — to survive the challenges ahead.

I am aware of fellow fishermen who strongly support the existence of the QSIA but, because of their own financial difficulties, are no longer members.

I suggest to them that they continue to support the organisation in all other ways, with the aim that, in changing circumstance, they will once again become financial members.

But, really, try to make the QSIA membership fee one of your priorities: there is no better insurance when it comes to hanging on to your fishing rights and especially to your fishing access.

To me, one of the original concepts in forming a peak body was to improve the overall operation of the catching sector, marketing benefits, etcetera.

However, one of its main roles nowadays has become protecting industry from unfair criticism and regulation, at an enormous cost of time, money and effort.

We fishermen have taken some hits but, without our organisation, the industry would have failed badly.

I remember one staff member (now retired) from the Queensland Fish Management Authority (QFMA) saying

there would be no commercial fishing industry in Moreton Bay in 10 years' time. And that was more than 20 years ago!

He was talking about Southport to Caloundra, and the fact that commercial fishing continues in most of those waters, and not just Moreton Bay but Hervey Bay and the rest of the Queensland coast, is testament to the hard work of individuals who together have given strength to our united industry body.

To those who might prefer to establish regional or local bodies, be mindful that fragmentation can lessen essential revenue required by a Statewide organisation and cause division, the very reason far-sighted fishermen more than 50 years ago worked so hard to provide strength and unity -in dealing with fishermen's problems.

Family history

I have a personal interest in seeing QSIA celebrate a century of fishermen's representation.

One reason is that my paternal grandfather, Jim O'Connell, was one of the founding members of the QPFA all those years ago, and his gold membership badge is a treasured memento.

My great-grandfather came to the south coast of Queensland from Ireland as a child in the early 1840s.

Most of the O'Connells spread out as farmers and cedar-getters from the northern end of what is now the Gold Coast down to the New South Wales border, and some of the family turned to oyster growing and fishing in the Southport Broadwater.

My grandfather and father were both professional fishermen, whose main income came from netting sea mullet in the winter months. It is a tradition that I continued, along with my son, Greg, though I have recently retired from active fishing.

I became a member of the Southport Branch of the QPFL in 1970, the same year I was elected for the first time for a three-year term as a Gold Coast City Council Alderman, later representing five southern QCFO Branches on the 10-man State Council and was QCFO Chairman in 1978-79, but was forced to resign when I was again elected as an Alderman on the City Council in 1979 (and later serving as Mayor of the Gold Coast from 1982-85).

I wouldn't have resigned the QCFO position but you had to derive two-thirds of your income from fishing in those days to hold a licence and that wasn't the case while I was on the Council.

I served on numerous bodies, including the Gold Coast (GC) Waterways Authority, GC Harbour Board, GC Catchment Association, GC Water Futures Advisory Committee and the Great Barrier Reef Advisory Committee.

I am particularly proud of having been able to set aside 1,900 acres of wetlands in and around Coombabah Lake (a fantastic area for water birds and fish nursery) in the 1973 Town Plan but was very disappointed to see the area drained for "mosquito control" later in the '70s, though it is still a conservation reserve.

I say that only to emphasise the fact I have been around a while and seen a few organisations operate. And, with that broad background of experience, I am as passionate as ever about the need for fishermen to maintain a strong, united representative body.

As I said earlier, fishermen throughout Queensland today, more than ever, still need a Statewide industry body to give them a strong, united voice.

It is absolutely essential for the future of the fishing and seafood industry and fishing and seafood families that we are united and work together to secure a prosperous future.

BOATS & GEAR

A new fishing hotspot – thanks to Glomex

AN increasing dependence on data, updates and tracking has meant that fast and stable internet has become more important in day-to-day fishing.

New internet systems available from Glomex, an Italian manufacturer specialising in antenna systems for professional use, will soon be available through Australian distributor TMQ.

A TMQ spokesperson said the WeBBoat 4G Lite Evo is an all-in-one system, a super-fast hotspot connecting to your PC and smart devices at sea, up to 15 miles from the coast (depending on location and distance from tower).

“The system can be set up and serviced remotely, and offers an encrypted and secure connection,” they said.

“For an extended range, both in terms of miles from the coast and distance from the antenna on board, the WeBBoat 4G Coastal & Ocean internet Extended Range Kit provides smart connectivity inside or on deck, and is a single SIM IP56 rated unit, that switches seamlessly between the port wi-fi and satellite-based internet.”

For more information on Glomex products, contact TMQ on (07) 3640 5600, visit www.tmq.com.au, or meet the team at Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show (Promenade Stand PR13) from May 20 to 23.



Boat Show is back at Gold Coast's Sanctuary Cove

THE 32nd edition of the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show is on again this year from May 20 to 23.

Organisers say this year's event will “cement its position as the Southern Hemisphere's premier boat show”.

“The event will transform Sanctuary Cove's pristine marina and Marine Village into a bustling industry showcase, welcoming the world's biggest names in boating,” a spokesman said.

“Industry-leading luxury brands like Maritimo, Horizon, Princess Yachts,



Palm Beach, Fleming, Grand Banks, Lagoon and Iliad are among those booked in for prime positions on water.

“On land, the likes of Yamaha, Quintrex, Jeanneau, JSW Powersports, Volvo Penta, Honda, Northside Marine and Zodiac are getting ready for major displays.

“The latest gear and gadgets will

also be on display in The Pavilions, with notable brands such as Stella, Garmin, Fusion, Navionics, Raymarine, Seabreeze, Dometic, JL Audio, C-Map, Lowrance, Simrad, B&G, VETUS-Maxwell, International Paint, Awlgrip and HELLA quick to secure space.”

To find out who is exhibiting this year, go to: <https://sanctuarycoveboatshow.com.au/exhibitor-directory/>

ENVIRONMENT NEWS

Federal Govt tips \$100M into the marine habitat

THE Federal Government will spend \$100 million on further protection for the marine environment.

“The Morrison Government will make an additional \$100 million investment to continue leading the world and our region in how we manage our ocean habitats and coastal environments and contribute to the global task of reducing emissions,” Prime Minister Scott Morrison said recently.

“The investment package will target ‘blue carbon’ ecosystems that involve seagrass and mangroves playing a key role in drawing carbon out of the atmosphere. The package will also support Australian Marine Parks, expand the Indigenous Protected Areas into Sea Country and protect marine life.”

Mr Morrison said Australia’s oceans economy not only supported 400,000 jobs and was projected to contribute \$100 billion each year but also would be key to Australia’s role in driving down emissions.

“This investment will boost the seagrass and mangroves that will help cut emissions and it’ll mean cleaner beaches, lower fisheries bycatch, more fish stocks, better protection for turtles and seabirds, and help for coastal and Indigenous communities reliant on the ocean for their livelihoods.”

Environment Minister Sussan Ley said this investment will see effective action that provides direct benefits to Australians through growth in the tourism, research and fisheries sectors, as well as deliver significant environmental outcomes.

“The package will be delivered across four key areas of Australia’s oceans management, implementing on ground actions to support Australian Marine Parks, expand the Indigenous Protected Areas into Sea Country, restore blue carbon ecosystems and protect iconic marine species.”

She said \$39.9 million will go towards reinforcing Australia’s position as a world leader in marine park management, including:

□ \$19.4 million to be delivered through two additional rounds

of the successful Our Marine Parks Grants program which will create opportunities for industry, community organisations and Indigenous communities to further engage and connect with the management of Australian Marine Parks;

- \$15 million towards ocean discovery and restoration projects to help us understand more about our marine parks; and
- \$5.4 million for steps to support the health and sustainability of the pristine waters around Australia’s Indian Ocean Territories.

A further \$11.6 million will be delivered over two years to incorporate Sea Country in Indigenous Protected Areas in nine locations to provide Indigenous communities with economic and employment opportunities.

A total of \$30.6 million will be invested in what the Minister calls “practical action” to restore and account for blue carbon ecosystems.

“This will improve the health of coastal environments in Australia and around the region, and export Australia’s internationally recognised expertise in ocean accounting, while boosting regional employment and enabling us to account for the value of these habitats as blue carbon repositories.

Ms Ley said:

- almost \$19 million will go to four major on-ground projects restoring coastal ecosystems across the country, including tidal marshes, mangroves and seagrasses;
- \$10 million will provide three major on-ground projects to assist developing countries in the region restore and protect their blue carbon ecosystems;
- over \$1 million will help to solidify Australia as a leader in ocean and natural capital accounting assistance, enabling researchers to understand and account for the environmental and economic benefits of protecting these critical ecosystems.

Another \$18 million will target practical actions to protect iconic marine species, improve the sustainability of our fisheries through reducing bycatch and stimulate investment in oceans:

- \$10 million will deliver ocean health through at least 25 targeted projects to restore and protect threatened marine species, eradicate invasive species from islands and restore coastal habitats;

- \$5 million will fund new and innovative measures to support the marine environment and sustainable fisheries through practical measures to avoid bycatch of threatened species; and
- \$3 million will support the roll-out of ocean accounting at a national scale

“The package will create regional jobs, engage coastal and Indigenous communities and the private sector, deliver actions to improve environmental outcomes for species and ecosystems, and provide a clear pathway for working with all sectors to realise Australia’s ocean potential.”

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THE GULL



Breath-taking

THIS is a true story.

The other day, I went to get a haircut and my barber, after the usual small talk, knowing my involvement in fishing and seafood, said “What do you think about the documentary *Seaspiracy*? A mate of mine says he’s not going to eat seafood after seeing it.”

I took a deep breath.

Seaspiracy is a Netflix Original documentary-style production backed by vegan activists (and produced by the same team responsible for *Cowspiracy* and *What the Health*).

It basically says that fishing is awful, there is no such thing as sustainable fishing and no-one should eat seafood (including seafood from aquaculture).

One of its claims is that the world will run out of fish by 2048. If that sounds familiar, it’s because the figure comes from a 2006 “research” paper that has been rebutted by leading fisheries scientists (and even the original authors have walked away from their own conclusions) and we have run numerous articles about it in this magazine.

The film is basically flawed and one-sided – but a lot of people have watched it. And, here in Australia, at least one person is seriously considering giving up seafood because of it.

So, I gave my barber a long list of reasons why the film is BS and why his mate should keep eating one of the healthiest, most sustainable foods on the planet.

In case you ever face the same question, a good way to start preparing your answers is to Google *The science of Seaspiracy - Sustainable Fisheries UW*

Scallop scam

RECENTLY, someone I know sent me some photos of scallops they had bought from their local butcher in a Queensland country town.

They were frozen, packaged scallops with no country-of-origin information but said to be Australian.

As you can see from the top photo, the scallops were clearly labelled \$32 / kg and the total price was \$32.



Obviously, the packet contained one kilo of scallops.

But, feeling they were a bit light on, my mate weighed them. Lo and behold: there was only a *half kilo* in scallops in there. So, the real price was \$64 / kg.

Then, when he thawed them on absorbent paper and re-weighed, they came down to a free-of-added-water weight of 380 grams. So, the real price he paid for scallop meat was \$84 / kg.

Now, even forgetting about the old-as-Methuselah trick of letting scallops soak in water so they weigh heavier

than they should, labelling scallops as \$32 / kg, charging \$32 for the packet and only putting 500 grams in the packet has got to be an offence.

He doesn’t blame the butcher. The butcher gets the scallops and other seafood delivered already packaged. But the people who put the packs together absolutely know better and, if it keeps happening, action will be taken.

Flying elephants

HEARD the joke about the bloke who’s flapping his arms around on the street and, when someone asks what he’s doing, says “Scaring the flying elephants away”, to which they say “But there are no flying elephants”, to which he replies: “Yeh, you see, it’s working”?

That’s a bit like Fisheries Minister Mark Furner announcing in a media release recently that the Government’s Sustainable Fisheries Strategy is delivering 33 actions across 10 “reform” areas that will safeguard fisheries for future generations and ensure a sustainable fishing industry for years to come.

Our fisheries and fishing industry were already sustainable and most fishermen will take a lot of convincing the current management changes are anything more than a complex and costly plan to reduce the share of the catch for seafood consumers and increase the share for recreational anglers and environmental activists.

The Minister also announced a goal of improving engagement and communication with fishing stakeholders in the management of fisheries.

That shouldn’t be a hard challenge to meet: there’s hardly any room for them to go in the opposite direction.

Piece of string

THE QSIA should buy Fisheries Queensland a daily diary – or a piece of string to tie on someone’s finger to remind them about something. What thing? Well, to apply to the Federal Environment Minister in time to re-register the ocean beach fishery for Wildlife Trade Operations approval for a start.

Here we are, with the ocean beach season underway, and authority to export the catch in limbo because Fisheries Queensland put in the application too late. As they say, you couldn’t make this stuff up.

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