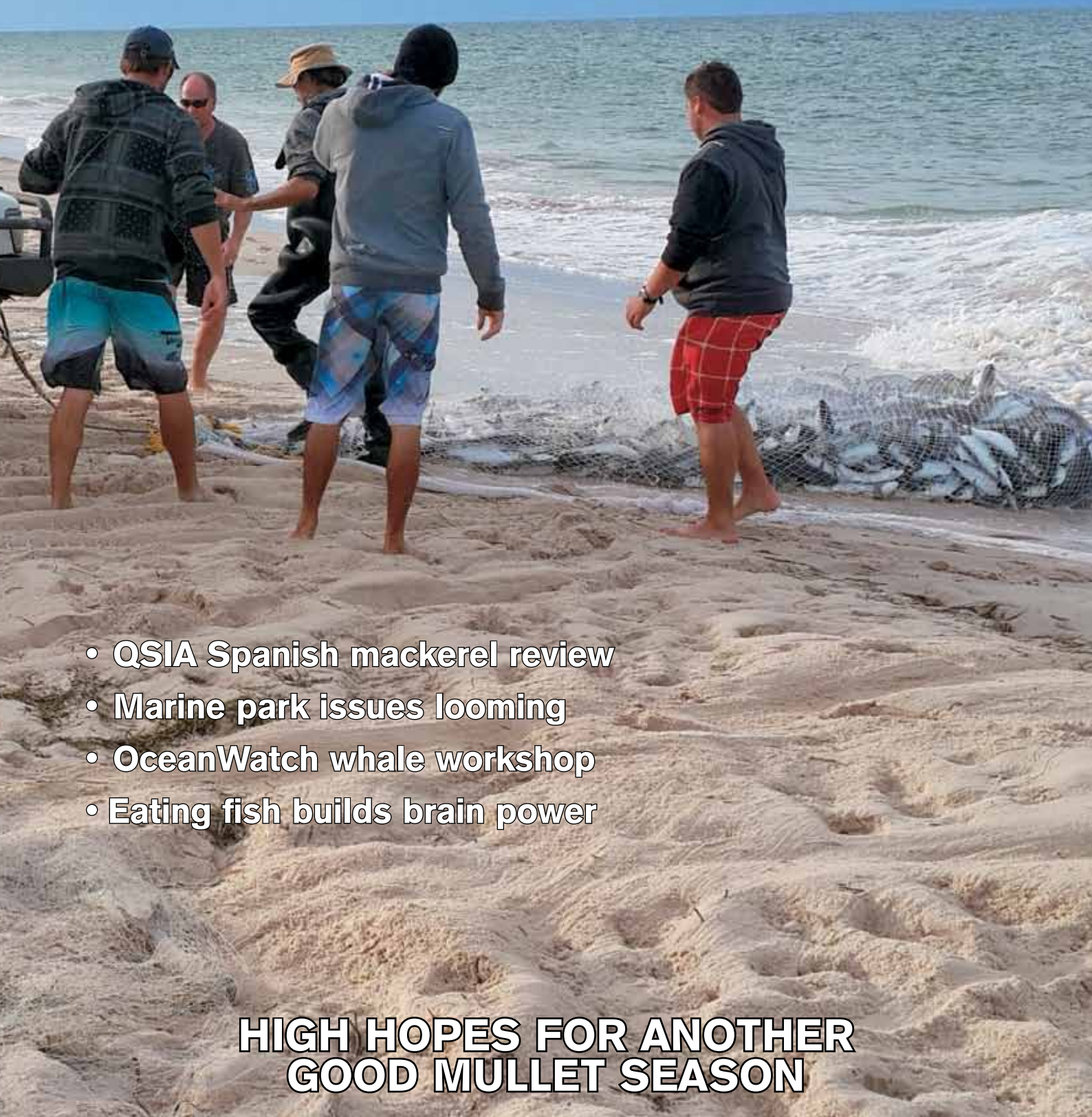


Queensland SEAFOOD

2023 NUMBER 2



- QSI Spanish mackerel review
- Marine park issues looming
- OceanWatch whale workshop
- Eating fish builds brain power

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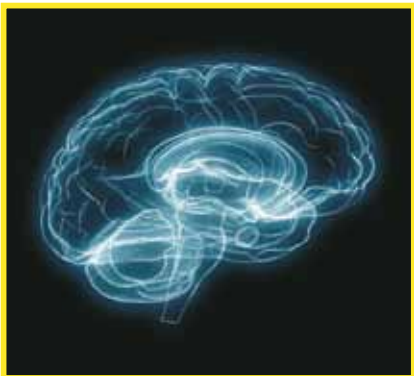
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In this edition ...

IT is a challenging time for the Queensland seafood industry and, as President Allan Bobbermen outlines in his column on page 4, there is still a great deal of uncertainty hanging over the industry, hamstringing fishers from making business decisions.

Issues include a campaign launched by environmental activist groups to ban net fishing in North Queensland in particular.

The QSIA is planning action to respond to this campaign, building on relationship-building by the CEO with relevant State and federal Ministers and departments.

Marine parks remain an issue for the QSIA, with consideration continuing of the draft new zoning plan for Great Sandy Marine Park, the rapidly approaching September meeting of the World Heritage Committee to consider whether to place the Great Barrier Reef on the “Endangered List” and an upcoming review Moreton Bay Marine Park. (See page 5.)

Meanwhile, the QSIA has successfully raised funds to investigate and review the rationality behind the Fisheries Queensland stock assessment of the Spanish mackerel fishery. (Turn to page 6 for details.)

OceanWatch Australia has conducted a valuable workshop for offshore crab fishers, looking to further reduce any risk

of interactions with whales, especially humpback whales that now migrate along the Queensland coast in tens of thousands every winter-spring. (See page 8.)

Believe it or not, after what were regarded as major bleaching events in 2016 and 2017, along with lesser bleaching events in other years, scientists from the Australian Institute of Marine Science have reported the greatest coral coverage in the central and northern sections of the Great Barrier Reef in 36 years of monitoring. This good news is reported on page 16.

Planned expansion of the marine park round Macquarie Island, roughly halfway between Australia and Antarctica, has angered seafood industry groups across the nation, because it looks to have been designed by environmental activist groups and adopted by the Federal Government with little if any consultation with affected fishing businesses. (See page 18.)

White spot disease, first seen in prawn farms on the northern Gold Coast, has now been found in prawn farms around Yamba in northern NSW, with trawl operators forced to tie up their boats as a result. (See page 20.)

And, good news for anyone entering middle age who wants to keep their mind razor sharp: eat more seafood. That’s the suggestion coming out of research from the United States. You can read all about it on page 24.

Front cover: An ocean beach crew at Bribie Island. There are hopes for another good mullet season on southern Queensland beaches this winter. (See articles beginning on page 12.)

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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Uncertainty hamstringing business decisions

HELLO everyone. I hope you are all coping with these difficult times confronting our industry.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty hanging over the industry, hamstringing fishers from making business decisions.

In the past week, we have seen lobby groups launching campaigns urging the government and public to support the UNESCO report, and what is disappointing is that Fishery Managers are not coming out in defence of the industry to dispel some of the flawed propaganda being published.

What QSIA is doing

Our CEO has met with the Environment and Fisheries Ministers, and senior members of their departments, to bridge the gap between industry and their departments.

There appears to be a commitment from this level to continue this dialogue, so we will see shortly by their actions how sincere they are with their loyalty.

Spanish mackerel review

We have successfully raised funds to investigate and review the rationality

behind the report from Fisheries Queensland with their recent stock assessment of the Spanish mackerel fishery.

Great Sandy Marine Park plan

We have had many discussions with the Department of Environment and Science, including a meeting with Minister Scanlon, the Director General and others to discuss the upcoming Great Sandy Marine Park (GSMP) review and our concerns with this plan's administration.

Included in this was the presentation of a "grand-fathering" proposal. We expect the final report to be handed down in the middle of the year.

Management working groups

In relation to management working groups for all fisheries, our concerns is the backlog of unresolved issues.

After numerous requests in previous working group meets, we have yet to be given any answers or a reason why a decision has not been made.

This is an issue that affects our Industry as I write. So, I ask how the working groups will forge ahead

successfully when older issues are still on the books. Some of these issues date back to 2019.

Green paper on independent monitoring

QSIA has launched a Green Paper for comment on independent data monitoring. Please fill out our questionnaire so we have industry input to take back to Government.

Trawl Committee

We have established a Trawl Sub-Committee. Our first meeting was held in late April, and your CEO will update you in his report.

Conclusion

Our membership has been increasing, mainly due to our restructuring and fresh approach. This has been brought about by appointing a CEO with the experience and fortitude to deal with the magnitude of issues confronting our industry.

We seek a journalist / lobbyist / media person to professionally present our case to strengthen our position, as this has never been done before – essentially, to confirm that we are coming to see you and be heard professionally.

In the meantime, stay afloat and do good fishing.

**Allan Bobbermen
President**



The QSIA has formed a Trawl Sub-Committee and its first meeting was held in late April.

QSIA: busy times handling multiple issues

FISHERS, it has been a busy few months. I have been actively building communication with government, which has seen me meet with Queensland Ministers Furner and Scanlon. I have also met with three Director-Generals, and multiple Executive Directors.

At a federal Level, I have had meetings with members of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment & Water, as well as the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation.

This relationship-building has allowed me to build the awareness of our industry and of QSIA.

It is clear to me that nothing happens quickly in government, so, while I would love to be able to announce a series of “wins”, alas I cannot – but at the same time there have been no losses.

As mentioned in my previous report, Marine Park spatial squeeze is a massive issue.

The current indications are that the draft zonings in the Great Sandy Strait will be adopted with some minor changes.

The Great Barrier Reef is under the microscope from eyes around the world. We are rapidly approaching the September meeting of the World Heritage Committee to consider the Reactive Monitoring Mission Report and Australia’s actions, deciding whether to place the Great Barrier Reef on the “Endangered List”.

A Moreton Bay Marine Park review will shortly commence. However, this has been described as a “light touch”, given that major changes have already taken place here.

Federally, the spatial squeeze is a significant issue and QSIA is part of an alliance, with Seafood Industry Australia and other State bodies, to come up with a coordinated approach responding to this issue.

Other States have issues with not only Marine Parks (Macquarie Island, for example) but also mineral exploration and wind farms. The

Northern Territory also has some significant Native Title access issues.

To help mitigate the effects of Marine Parks, the issue of Independent Data Validation must be dealt with.

The new QSIA Trawl Sub-Committee has prepared a draft green paper to explore ways that this might be re-introduced, with or without electronic data capture (eg cameras). Soon, it will publish a final Green Paper for comment.

While this is being driven by trawl, it is an issue for all fisheries. So, please join in the conversation.

Speaking of the Trawl Sub-Committee, this was re-established following meetings I had in Urangan, Cairns and Townsville, where it became apparent to me that QSIA needed to have sub-committees re-established for all fisheries.

Trawl is the pilot for this. In the coming months, sub-committees will be established for line, crab and net fisheries.

The purpose of the sub-committees is not to replicate the role of the Queensland Department of Agriculture & Fisheries’ Working Groups.

The Sub-Committees look at the Industry as a whole; for example, staffing, AMSA issues, training, research and development.

Our internet site will soon be updated to show who is on the committees, the projects being undertaken and minutes of meetings.

With the successful raising of funds, the review of the 2021 Spanish Mackerel Stock Assessment will commence in late May and should be completed by early June. Data is being prepared for Dr Simon Hoyle’s consideration.

In my meetings with Government, there is significant support for the review and Dr Hoyle’s appointment. My hope is that this will lead to some tangible action should significant issues be raised by the review.

OceanWatch Australia has obtained funding for two Codes of Best Practice: one for Whale Entanglement on trot /

header lines and the other on Inshore Net Fishing.

These are important Codes, so please help them out if you get a chance. There is an article on some of this work in this edition of the Magazine (beginning on page 8).

I have also met with the Queensland Small Business Commissioner, Ms Dominique Lamb. Their role is to help small business with any issues that they are having.

They are located in Brisbane but move around the State, holding great information sessions. I recommend that you make yourself familiar with their services: <https://qsbc.qld.gov.au/>

Just a reminder that if you or a mate is doing it tough, to get in touch with our good friends at Stay Afloat. They have already helped a number of people out.

The good news is that they have just received funding to continue this program. Watch out for the sister program: Sea Safe! (See page 28.)

In the coming months, QSIA will continue to build awareness of the Queensland Wild Catch Commercial Fishing Industry through advocacy at all levels of Government and media.

It will also continue to be pro-active in offering solutions to Government on various issues, including Independent Data Validation and Ideas for Reform.

Until next time

David Bobbermen
CEO

Stay Afloat attracting attention

THE Stay Afloat mental health project for the seafood industry has been attracting positive publicity recently.

A report compiled for Seafood Industry Australia as part of this program has revealed that fishers experience poor mental health at twice the rate of the general population.

More than \$1 million has been set aside to help fishers experiencing mental health issues.

Amongst the media coverage of Stay Afloat is a feature segment on the ABC’s “Landline” program. Google “ABC Landline” and scroll to the episode on March 26 to watch the segment and learn more about the project..

MANAGEMENT NEWS

Re-assessment of mackerel stocks launched by QSIA

THE Queensland Seafood Industry Association has launched an independent assessment of the east coast Spanish mackerel stocks.

QSIA has engaged the services of Dr Simon Hoyle to conduct an independent review of the 2021 East Coast Spanish Mackerel (ECSM) Stock Assessment developed by Queensland Fisheries.

The peer-reviewed stock assessment from Fisheries Queensland concluded a probable unfished bio-mass of 17 per cent – resulting in a 71 per cent reduction in the total allowable catch (TAC) for commercial fishers, and bag limit reductions for charter and recreational fishers (effective from 1 July 2023).

Dr Hoyle, who is based in New Zealand, is a highly-regarded, widely-published tuna family expert, including Spanish mackerel. He was involved in

stock assessments of the East Coast Spanish Mackerel Fishery up to 2002.

He has allocated time in late May to carry out this review. Dr Hoyle will also use the services of another New Zealand stock assessment scientist.

It is proposed that a Review Working Group will be formed to prepare the brief to Dr Hoyle and (prior to commencement) provide him with any relevant data / questions for consideration. This group will work with Dr Hoyle, Fisheries Queensland (and its expert panel), and all fishers.

QSIA has written to Fisheries Queensland seeking their commitment to full and open access to the 2021 ECSM Stock Assessment data.

As this is an independent review of the 2021 stock assessment, there is no guarantee of the findings. It is NOT a complete recalculation of the stock assessment.

Where appropriate, it will make recommendations for follow-up science, such as Fisheries Queensland stock assessors.

Funding support

QSIA is seeking support from all



The QSIA has launched an independent reassessment of the Spanish mackerel stock.

fishers to fund this independent review of the 2021 ECSM stock assessment and follow up actions with Fisheries Queensland.

QSIA launched an appeal for funds in March, looking to all commercial fishers, charter boat operators and recreational anglers to contribute.

For anyone still wanting to contribute, the account details are:

QSIA Spanish Mackerel Project Account

BSB: 124021 (Bank of Queensland)

Account Number: 21664372

Alternatively, you can post a cheque (payable to Queensland Seafood Industry Association Inc.) to: QSIA, PO Box 8411, Woolloongabba Q 4102.

Please either email QSIA Project Team (ecsm@qsia.com.au) with your details when you deposit funds or place a note in with your cheque. A tax invoice and receipt will be provided.

For businesses, any contributions ought to be tax-deductible and GST able to be claimed back.

Stay up-to-date with this project at <https://qsia.com.au/ecsm/> (where you can sign up to newsletters) or via social media.

For further information, contact David Bobbermen, QSIA Chief Executive Officer, on 0417 631 353.

LAW essentials

Hot Issues

- 1. MORETON BAY - WHITE SPOT DISEASE CLASS ACTION – NO WIN, NO FEE**
The claim is well advanced. We are in the process of finalising witness statements and sorting out the range of experts required. The Court has also recently approved our side to make some important changes to the statement of claim to improve the case for the fishing industry.
- 2. GLADSTONE PORT DREDGING CLASS ACTION – NO WIN, NO FEE**
We are waiting on GPC to finalise and file their witness statements, including their expert evidence.
- 3. CLARENCE RIVER (NSW) - WHITE SPOT DISEASE (POTENTIAL) CLASS ACTION – NO WIN, NO FEE**
Sadly another white spot disease issue in NSW. Early stages yet to determine if a class action can be commenced. Impacted business should register their interest with Law Essentials if they wish to be a part of it.
- 4. GREAT SANDY MARINE PARK PLAN – COMPENSATION**
Once details are released from government regarding their "proposed" compensation package, Law Essentials will be assisting fishers with any claims, including potential claims that are NOT part of the package.

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.**

Contact **Chris Thompson** on (p) 4197 5600 | (m) 0409 517 587
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Palaszczuk Govt injects \$7.5M into aquaculture

FISHERIES Minister Mark Furner has announced the Palaszczuk Government will invest an additional \$7.5 million into Queensland's aquaculture industry.

"The funding will include \$3.8 million for research, development and extension activities, \$1.5 million for industry development, a \$1.1 million program to improve regulation and technical guidance, and \$1 million to establish an aquaculture incubator," Mr Furner said.

"It comes as the latest Ross Lobegeiger Report shows the Palaszczuk Government's strong support for aquaculture is paying dividends for North Queensland, with the number of jobs for Townsville in the booming industry doubling.

"The report shows the number of full-time equivalent aquaculture jobs in the Townsville region have rocketed to 218 in 2021-22 – up from 109 in 2020-21.

"The Palaszczuk Government has overseen a Queensland aquaculture revolution that has increased the value of the industry by more than \$100 million in the three years from 2018-19.

"The industry has grown to a record value of \$224.7 million in 2021-22, up from the previous record of \$193.5 million in 2020-21.

"In 2021-22, aquaculture employed the full-time equivalent of 889 Queenslanders, up from 786 the previous financial year.

"From lobster to redclaw crayfish and barramundi, North Queensland's aquaculture industry is the 'reel' deal, and it's continuing to attract new investment.

"This \$7.5 million Palaszczuk Government investment will mean more industry development and more guidance for our aquaculture businesses.

"Under the Palaszczuk Government, Queensland aquaculture has grown from a fingerling to a big fish.

"We've declared more than 9,000 hectares of Aquaculture Development



Areas across eight land parcels in the last four years.

"We want Queensland to be the aquaculture capital of the world, and our investment will help us to further partner with industry and grow the already world-class reputation of Queensland seafood."

Global pact for the high seas

AN Australian-backed global treaty to conserve the world's high seas and ensure they are used sustainably has been agreed to at the United Nations.

Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong said the treaty builds on the Australian Government's work at the Montreal Biodiversity COP, where Australia led negotiations for a high-ambition Global Biodiversity Framework – protecting 30 per cent of the oceans by 2030.

"Australia's leadership and cooperation with like-minded countries has seen the new Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdictions treaty (High Seas Treaty) agreed," Senator Wong said.

"The new treaty creates stronger protections for our oceans and increases opportunities for international collaboration, including on marine science and marine protected areas (MPAs) on the high seas.

The treaty:

- ❑ creates a framework to establish MPAs on the high seas;
- ❑ sets up a rigorous environmental impact assessment process to achieve nature positive outcomes;
- ❑ ensures that the interests and contribution of Indigenous Peoples and local communities are recognised; and
- ❑ puts in place a regime to regulate the use of marine genetic resources.

Operation nets 38 tonnes of biosecurity risks

BIOSECURITY officers have executed one of Australia's largest single biosecurity detections, during a significant find in Sydney that included raw prawns and turtle meat.

Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry Minister Murray Watt said in early April seven shipping containers' worth of goods, including raw prawns, turtle meat, frog meat, pork, beef and avian products had been intercepted.

What was code-named Operation Avoca netted 116 different types of products, weighing a combined total of around 38 tonnes.

"This major discovery has prevented significant risks to Australian biosecurity," Senator Watt said.

"The investigation remains ongoing, and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry will continue to collaborate with Australian Federal Police, Australian Border Force and all other relevant government agencies throughout the next phase of the investigation."

He said the operation reflects the Federal Government's determination to keep exotic pests and diseases out of Australia.

"This is a huge detection by Biosecurity Officers from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. We are talking about 38 tonnes of goods which could be carrying diseases that could have had catastrophic consequences to our agricultural sector.

"We often see smaller quantities of risk products brought in through parcels in the mail or carried by incoming passengers, and officers work extremely hard to stamp out these threats.

"However, a discovery of this size and nature is a stark reminder of what's at stake if we don't continue to fiercely protect our precious biosecurity.

"There are severe penalties for breaching the Biosecurity Act. You could face 10 years imprisonment and fines of up to \$1,375,000 for an individual, or \$6,875,000 for a company".

Suspicious activity can be reported to Biosecurity Hotline 1800 798 636 or REDLINE 1800 803 006.

OceanWatch workshop to help fishers avoid whale interactions

OceanWatch Australia has conducted a workshop – and is planning follow-up gear trials – to help fishers avoid interactions with whales.

by Dave Schubert and Michael Wooden

OCEANWATCH Australia has conducted a co-design workshop at Mooloolaba to assist the fishing industry avoid interaction with whales. (A “co-design” workshop aims to involve all sectors of stakeholders in the early phases of the design process.)

The workshop was attended by OceanWatch Australia, fishing industry representatives, researchers, marine mammal experts, dis-entanglement operators and fisheries managers.

The workshop and further work to follow will help demonstrate that the industry is being pro-active in trying to further reduce the already low risk of whale interactions with commercial fishing gear, and they will also encourage collaboration between fishers, researchers and managers.

The workshop was funded by the Australian Government Community Grants Hub (Our Marine Parks – Round 3) as part of a broader project entitled “Protecting Humpback Whales of the Temperate East Marine Park”. This is a three-State based program which

enhances fishing industry mitigation success along the humpback whale migration pathway.

As part of this project, Queensland professional fishers operating in three fisheries have been engaged by OceanWatch to encourage a collaborative and strategic approach to minimise risk of humpback whale interactions with ocean-deployed commercial fishing gear on the east coast of Queensland.

Workshop aims

The workshop was conducted by OceanWatch Australia in Mooloolaba March 29.

It was designed to:

- ❑ improve fisher awareness of relevant information, including details of the recovering humpback whale population, migratory pathways, interaction concerns, interaction data, reporting and disentanglement operations;
- ❑ provide relevant stakeholders an

opportunity to participate in the workshop to ensure a collaborative and agreed strategy to minimise any potential risks;

- ❑ identify fisheries of concern that have potential for whale interaction;
- ❑ encourage a pro-active approach that reduces the identified low risk of whale interactions with Queensland ocean-deployed commercial fishing gear; and
- ❑ identify potential improvements to fishing practices, behaviours or other options which may be trialled by fishers to determine practicality.

Although attendees at the workshop agreed interactions such as whale entanglement in commercial fishing gear are relatively rare in Queensland, industry representatives suggested a range of measures to further reduce the risk. OceanWatch will now fund trials and other work to assess these measures.

The three fisheries in Queensland most likely to see interactions with whales had been identified as the spanner crab, offshore blue swimmer



Participants in the OceanWatch whale workshop included (from left): Adam Rockliff, crabber; Shane Underhill, crabber; Andre Gorissen, Fraser Isle Spanner Crab; Muhammad Ichsan, University of the Sunshine Coast (USC); Richard Freeman, crabber; Steve Eayrs, Fisheries Research & Development Corporation ...



Intergenerational fishermen at the workshop (from left): Ben and Bill Gilliland and Macca and Paul Hyland.

crab and offshore net fisheries. Fishers from all three fisheries attended the OceanWatch workshop.

It was established that fishers are already implementing a range of practical steps to avoid whales, particularly the humpback whales that migrate in large numbers along much of the Queensland east coast between May and October. However, fishers

supported trialling the practicality of gear and techniques that have the potential to minimise risk of whale entanglements.

Two key areas were identified:

- ❑ float lines (or header gear) that run more or less vertically through the water column from bottom-

set crab-fishing gear (spanner crab dillies and blue swimmer crab pots) up to a float on the surface; and

- ❑ floating mainline (polypropylene rope) forming Harbour Bridge-type arcs of rope between spanner crab dillies on the sea floor.

Recommended gear trials

Fishers suggested trialling sinking (negatively buoyant) rope and this



... David Bobbermen, QSIA CEO; Max Giaroli, Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association; Leslie Roberson, University of Queensland; Bill Gilliland, net fisher; Ben Gilliland, net fisher; and Bonnie Holmes, USC.



The workshop was conducted by Dave Schubert, OceanWatch Australia Queensland Project Officer (right) ...



... and Michael Wooden, OceanWatch Australia Wild Catch Fisheries Program Manager (right).

will form part of future trials funded by OceanWatch during the 2023 humpback whale migration.

Other gear to be tested include a spot tracker, or satellite tag device. Fishers could potentially carry one of these in their boat and attach it to fishing gear trailing behind a whale, allowing the whale to be located relatively easily by a specialist disentanglement crew.

Lastly, some fishers want to trial underwater acoustic alarms called 'Pingers'. The workshop identified that these devices are currently considered best practice in mitigating against whales and dolphins.

The primary objective of gear trials will be to establish the practicality and logistics of changes to gear configuration intended to mitigate whale entanglements in real time fishing scenarios, and to measure fishers' confidence in those modifications or changes in configuration. Workshop results will be used to guide and prioritise field trials.

Also, OceanWatch will work with fishers to develop a Code of Practice document pulling together fishers' advice on existing methods of avoiding whale interactions and actions to be taken if a whale does tangle fishing gear or is seen by fishers trailing ropes or other material.

Next steps

The next step in the project is to extend key information from the workshop to fishers who were not able to attend.

During this extension period, OceanWatch Australia will engage skippers and quota-holders to discuss their participation in the upcoming gear trials, as identified in the workshop.

Fisheries managers attending the workshop on the day were able to confirm that there will be no need to obtain any research permits to trial identified gear, as all options are within the current regulations.

OceanWatch has identified suppliers for the gear to be trialled and will update with pricing.

Further information

For further information about the OceanWatch Australia workshop (including a more detailed report of the workshop) and follow-up work, contact Dave Schubert, Queensland Project Officer on 0418 174 912 or at dave@oceanwatch.org.au

Queensland fishers see spectacular recovery in humpback whale numbers

THE most common large whale species seen in Queensland waters is the humpback whale, which migrates up and back along the east coast between May and October.

Historically, whales were extensively hunted throughout the world's oceans, including off the Australian coast from the early days of European settlement. By the time the International Whaling Commission (IWC) banned hunting of humpback whales in the Southern Hemisphere in 1963, over-exploitation had already reduced them to an estimated 5 per cent or less of their original population.

Despite strict controls on the numbers of humpback whales killed by Australian whaling vessels (such as those based at Byron Bay in northern New South Wales and at Tangalooma, on Moreton Island, near Brisbane), high-seas whaling had dramatically reduced numbers.

In particular, Soviet fleets are believed to have killed 48,702 humpbacks between 1947 and 1973 – more than half of those in the two whaling seasons of 1959-60 and 1960-61. (Whalers from the Soviet Union continued to whale illegally throughout much of the Southern Ocean after the IWC ban.)

It is estimated that in 1963 the number of humpbacks travelling the Australian east coast had been reduced to a little over 100 individuals. (For more information, go to the Australian Government site: <https://www.dceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/eastern-humpback-whales.pdf>)

Since the 1960s, humpback whale numbers on the Australian east coast have made a dramatic recovery. The workshop was told the number of humpback whales migrating from summertime feeding grounds in the Southern Ocean to wintertime breeding and calving grounds off North Queensland are now estimated at approximately 35,000 to 40,000 individuals (perhaps having already reached the pre-whaling population).

Most of these whales (more than 95 per cent) are believed to travel within 10 km of the coast for much of their journey along the east coast – in some cases, the same inshore waters where fishing gear like spanner crab dillies, blue swimmer crab pots and some nets can be set.



In the lifetimes of many professional fishers, humpback whales have gone from rare sightings to abundant off the Queensland coast during mid-year migrations.

While precautions already taken by commercial fishers significantly reduce the likelihood of interactions with humpbacks and other whales – and it was agreed the incidence of interactions is extremely low – clearly there is potential for interactions, such as entanglement in rope, particularly if whale numbers continue to grow.

Nominally, 40,000 humpback whales swimming past any point on the Queensland east coast migration route during a six-month period equates to more than 200 whales a day, and – as they migrate up and back during that period – this figure can be doubled to a theoretical average of more than 400 whales each day, the vast majority within a relatively narrow 10km band along the coast.

While these figures are simply gross averages and necessarily inaccurate for any particular day – on some days the actual figure would be far lower than this and on some days far higher – they do illustrate the density of whales that can be expected to occur at times along the Queensland coast.

The recovery of humpback whale numbers seen in Australian waters – from hundreds to tens of thousands in a period of 60 years – has been so rapid that most of that population growth has occurred within the working life of many current commercial fishers.

During that time, they have continually adapted to the reality of increased whale numbers on and around their fishing grounds, but, with humpback whale numbers apparently increasing by around 10 per cent every year, recognise the need to continually explore means of minimising any risk of entanglement.

Consequently, fishers have been supportive of an initial scoping workshop and follow-up work to further develop risk minimisation strategies, to develop collaborative relationships with researchers and others interested in whales and to publicly demonstrate their ongoing pro-active approach to protecting whales.

OCEAN BEACH FISHERY

Promising signs for winter season ahead on the ocean beaches

There have been promising signs for the wintertime mullet season on southern Queensland ocean beaches, with good quantities of fish seen early.

EXPERIENCED beach fisherman Greg Savage said recently he had spotted a school of 200 tonnes of mullet off Sandgate in Moreton Bay in March, a surprising quantity of fish to see so early in the season.

“A lot of the mullet we catch in Queensland this time of year have migrated north from New South Wales, so rain and rough seas in places like the Clarence and Richmond Rivers and adjacent coast can send the fish out to sea and up to Queensland.” Speaking in late April – just before the traditional unofficial “opening” of the ocean beach mullet season on Anzac Day – Greg said he believed 2023 would see an early season.

“I think a lot of the fish this year will be caught in May. There are already good quantities of fish showing up and the females have roes that were already half-developed in mid-April, so they’ll be fully-roed fairly soon.

“Last year, on Bribie Island, where I fish for mullet, we had a better-than-average season, and I hope we’ll get a repeat of that this year.”

Greg said the weather, especially wind direction, would play a critical role.

“As every beach fisherman knows, mullet will travel close to the beach with a westerly wind, so we are always hoping for south-westerlies.

“With a north-westerly, the mullet will still travel but the seas are usually too rough for us to work with the wind from that direction. With big south-easterlies, the mullet will head out to sea and bypass the beach, so we miss them entirely.

“When we catch fish and haul them on the beach, it looks like a lot, but there are always more mullet swim past out to sea than we ever catch. We see a lot of fish going to sea.”

Greg said netting crews tended to work co-operatively on Bribie Island.

“There were about 70 licences in the Queensland ocean beach fishery and now, due to buybacks, that is down

to around 30. There were 13 licences on Bribie and now there are seven.

“For the last few years, we have been working together to make everything more efficient and try to cut everyone’s costs a little, and pull our belts in a bit tighter.

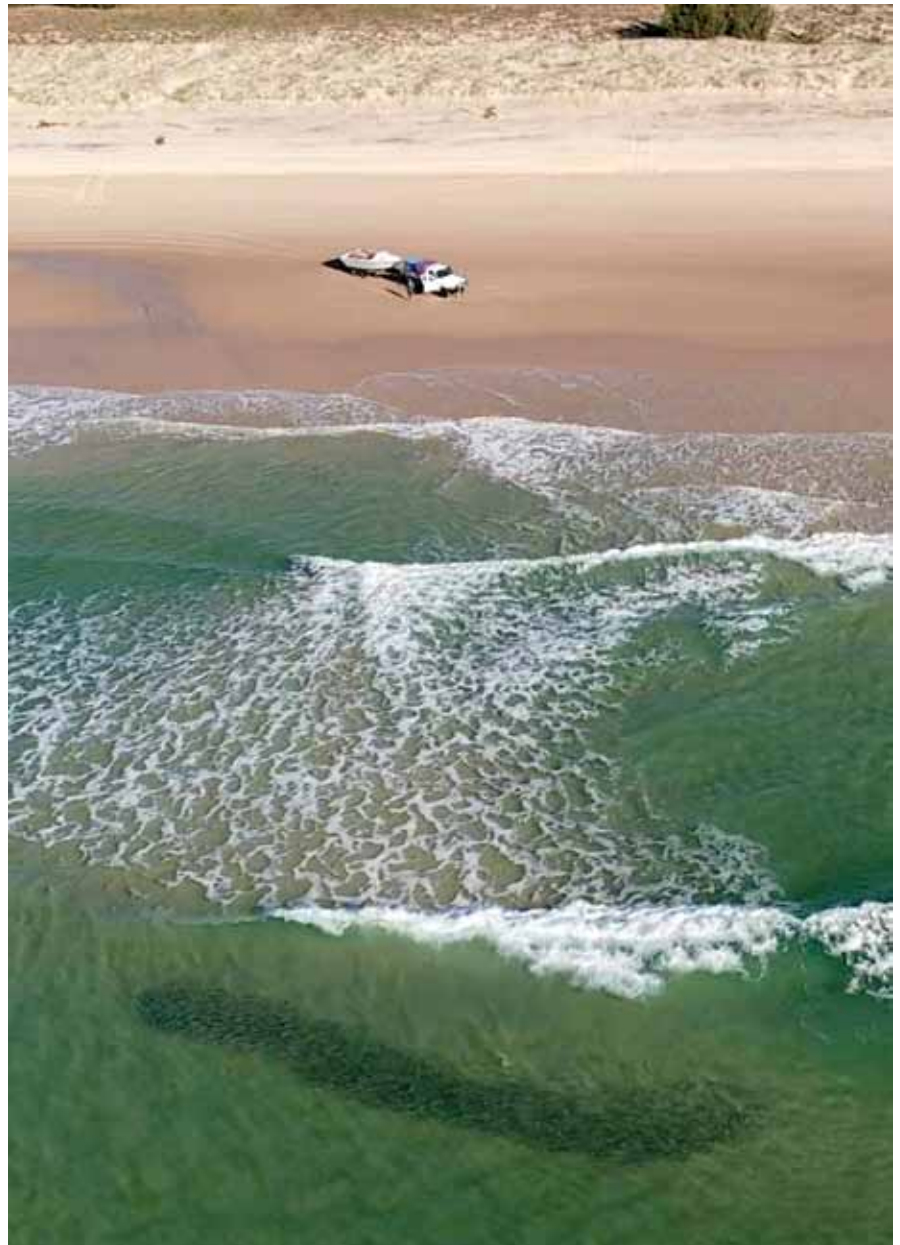
“The cost of everything is going up, especially fuel, but all our inputs cost more this year than they did last year and the year before.”

When interviewed for this article, Greg had not received prices for the coming season from his buyer but in 2022 the price rose 20 per cent over the previous year and he was hoping prices would stay up in 2023.

“Like most primary production, quantities and prices often work in opposite directions: when catches are higher, prices are lower, and when catches are lower, prices are higher, so it tends to even out.

“Because some of our catch is exported, the relative value of the Australian dollar to the US dollar makes a difference to our prices too, because deals are usually done in US dollars, and right now the Aussie dollar is around 67 cents US, so that’s a good rate for exporters.”

Greg has been working the ocean



A school of mullet moving along the surf beach. Many schools go wide, out of reach for beach crews.

beaches since the 1970s and loves doing it – but is glad he has diversified into other fisheries as well and has the option of catching other species if the mullet price drops too low.

In recent years, Greg has expanded his family fishing operations, for example upgrading their trucks, and holding licences for different fisheries and different areas.

“We have expanded rather than getting smaller, and we’re prepared to move around to find fish. You have to be flexible.

“The increasing amount of paperwork and bureaucracy is a killer, but looking ahead into the future, there’s still good demand for local fish and the stocks are still good.

“Management, resource reallocation and marine parks are issues but the long-term demand and stock situation is good. One hundred per cent.”

Despite the challenges of prices, weather and the unpredictable mind of a mullet on the move, there is still something that always draws Greg to the ocean beach fishery.

“It’s exciting fishing,” he said. “After all these years, I still get excited about fishing on the ocean beach. I always look forward to it.”



Early signs have fishermen hoping for another good mullet season.



Recent rough weather in places like the Clarence River coast might have sent northern New South Wales mullet up to southern Queensland early.

Unusual monitoring confirms ongoing sustainability of mullet fishery

A novel, collaborative approach between industry and scientists to monitor the New South Wales commercial mullet fishery in 2020 despite Covid-19 restrictions has been described as a great success.

A REPORT on the project has said its major benefit was in being able to demonstrate the ongoing sustainability of this fishery and so maintaining its social licence to continue.

The project has been reported in the journal *Fisheries Research*. The report said that outcomes from the project including proving that:

- ❑ scientists and the fishing industry can overcome unforeseen impediments to monitoring, such as the Covid-19 pandemic;
- ❑ byproduct from fish processing, in this case mullet heads, can be useful for monitoring the landed catch; and
- ❑ conversion of partial to total lengths can be effective for monitoring.

The report said that the Covid-19 global pandemic-related restrictions during 2020 severely impacted the Australian seafood industry, including essential scientific monitoring to support stock assessment and to demonstrate sustainability.

One of the responses was a novel, collaborative monitoring program between scientists and the seafood industry to generate length and age compositions that were representative of what the researchers describe as “one of the largest, most valuable, and controversial fisheries along eastern Australia – the pre-spawning ocean run fishery for the sea mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) that is predominantly a roe fishery”.

The standard approach to monitoring this fishery has been to base trained scientific staff at the major processing facility for sea mullet, where they access whole fish from entire catches to generate representative length and age compositions during the peak season, April to May. Covid-19 restrictions prevented this approach for 2020 in eastern Australia.

In recognition that in addition to the high-value roe, all components of the female fish are utilised (heads and guts for bait, bodies for human consumption), a multi-stage sampling design was investigated.

Female heads were retained from randomly selected catches from each

of the three major fishing zones and transported to the New South Wales Department of Primary Industries fish laboratory based in Sydney.

Head lengths (HLs) were measured and converted to Fork Lengths (FLs) using a HL to FL relationship. The resulting fish length compositions from each catch were subsequently combined based on:

- ❑ relative catch size of females within an ocean zone; and
- ❑ the relative reported landings of females in each ocean fishing zone.

Otoliths (or “ear bones”) were randomly collected from heads sampled from each ocean zone and used to estimate age. The resulting ocean zone to

age matrix was combined with the relative reported landings of female fish in each ocean fishing zone to generate a total female age composition for the fishery.

The estimated age composition of females were typical in being mainly between ages 3 and 6, with a strong presence of 4-year-olds. This stronger cohort was present as 3-year-olds in 2018-19 and 5-year olds in 2020-21, thus providing confidence that their sampling was representative of the fishery.

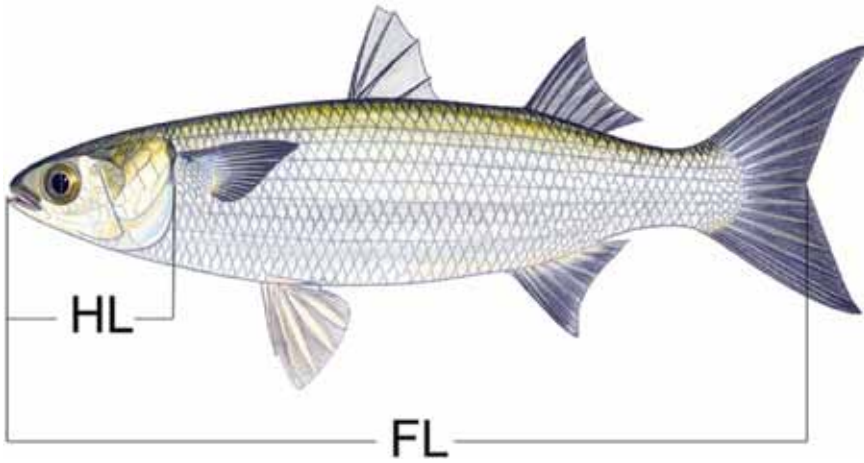
The authors say the study reinforces the positive outcomes that can be generated through co-management between scientists and the seafood industry.

“Our positive results could potentially lead to further investigations into monitoring fishery landings of species that are processed at sea, and consequently have been viewed as requiring relatively expensive onboard monitoring via trained scientific observers,” they say.

The authors say that, while there



Despite Covid-related challenges, monitoring of catches has confirmed the ongoing sustainability of the mullet fishery.



A consistent relationship between head length and fork length has allowed measurement of heads alone to indicate the length of processed mullet.

were some limitations when compared to the traditional monitoring – where trained scientific staff are based directly at the seafood facility to access whole fish from entire catches – there were significant benefits.

“The major benefit was in being able to demonstrate the ongoing sustainability of this fishery and in maintaining its social licence to continue,” the authors say.

“In addition, there were substantial savings through a reduction in time that trained scientific monitoring staff had

to be in the field, based at the seafood facility for several weeks.

“These extended trips are often hampered when rough seas or other detrimental factors mean that fish are not being caught, resulting in paid staff having nothing to monitor. Such non-productive days were not an issue with the novel sampling design.

“In fact, during 2019-20, we were able to sample approximately 2,500 fish for length monitoring, compared with the more typical number of around 1,500.

“Enabling the seafood industry to have increased ownership of the monitoring, and the resultant fishery assessment, increases trust and collaboration between the industry and regulatory authorities.

“As commercial fisheries in New South Wales transition to more modern management regimes, including formal harvest strategies and cost-sharing arrangements, an increased focus on industry-based data collection and co-management is expected. The novel approach used here could be used as a case study when developing future monitoring programs.”

This project was reported in the journal *Fisheries Research*, Volume 250, in a paper entitled “Using their heads - A novel, collaborative approach between industry and scientists to monitor a commercial mullet fishery as a result of COVID-19 restrictions” written by John Stewart, James R. Craig, Chantelle Clain, Anne-Marie Hegarty, Nicholas M. Meadows, Antony Gould and Caitlin Young from the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Sydney Institute of Marine Science.

Full report: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.fishres.2022.106272>

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Scientists observe greatest coral cover in central, northern GBR in 36 years

THE northern and central sections of the Great Barrier Reef have recorded their greatest amount of coral cover since the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) began monitoring 36 years ago.

AIMS scientists surveying the GBR in 2021-22 found another year of increased coral cover across much of the Reef.

In the 87 representative reefs surveyed, under the AIMS Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP), average hard coral cover in the region north of Cooktown increased to 36 per cent (from 27 per cent in 2021) and to 33 per cent in the central GBR (from 26 per cent in 2021). However, average coral cover in the southern region (from Proserpine to Gladstone) decreased from 38 per cent to 34 per cent.

AIMS CEO Paul Hardisty said the results in the north and central regions were a sign the GBR could still recover but the loss of coral cover in the southern region showed how dynamic the Reef is.

“A third of the gain in coral cover we recorded in the south in 2020-21 was lost (in 2021-22) due to ongoing crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks,” Dr Hardisty said.

“This shows how vulnerable the Reef is to the continued acute and severe disturbances that are occurring more often, and are longer-lasting.”



An observer on a “manta tow” over a reef, one of the ways of assessing coral cover. (Photo copyright AIMS.)

Dr Hardisty said the increased frequency of mass coral bleaching events was “uncharted territory” for the Reef, with the 2022 bleaching event the fourth in seven years and the first to occur during a La Niña. AIMS monitoring program team leader Mike Emslie said the 2022 results built on the increases in coral cover reported for 2021, with most of the increase continuing to be driven by fast-growing *Acropora* corals.

“These corals are particularly vulnerable to wave damage, like that generated by strong winds and tropical cyclones,” Dr Emslie said.

“They are also highly susceptible to coral bleaching, when water temperatures reach elevated levels, and are the preferred prey for crown-of-thorns starfish.

“This means that large increases in hard coral cover can quickly be negated by disturbances on reefs where *Acropora* corals predominate.”

A report on the 2021-22 survey says the 36-year-long dataset of AIMS’ Long-Term Monitoring Program (LTMP) is the largest, longest, and most comprehensive information source on the health of the Great Barrier Reef. It helps determine long-term trends in the condition of coral communities across the Reef.

Percent hard coral cover describes the proportion of the reef that is covered in living hard coral. In 2021-

22, most reefs surveyed had between 10 and 50 per cent.

The report says that widespread recovery has led to the highest coral cover recorded by the LTMP in the Northern and Central GBR, largely due to increases in the fast-growing *Acropora* corals, which are the dominant group of corals on the GBR and have been largely responsible for previous changes in hard coral cover. Survey reefs experienced low levels of other acute stress over the past 12 months, with no severe cyclones impacting the Marine Park. The number of crown-of-thorns starfish outbreaks on survey reefs has generally decreased; however, there remain ongoing outbreaks on some reefs in the southern region.

The combination of few acute stresses and lower accumulated heat stress in 2020 and 2022 compared to 2016 and 2017 has resulted in low coral mortality and has allowed coral cover to continue to increase in the northern and central regions.

It says that, in periods free from intense acute disturbances, most GBR coral reefs demonstrate resilience through the ability to begin recovery. However, the reefs of the GBR continue to be exposed to cumulative stressors.

The prognosis for the future disturbance regime suggests increasing and longer-lasting marine heatwaves, as well as the ongoing risk of outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish and tropical cyclones. Therefore, while the observed recovery offers good news for the overall state of the GBR, there is increasing concern for its ability to maintain that state.

To read AIMS’ Annual Summary Report on Coral Reef Condition for 2021/22, go to: www.aims.gov.au/monitoring-great-barrier-reef/gbr-condition-summary-2021-22

Funding boost

ENVIRONMENT Minister Tanya Plibersek has announced the Australian Institute of Marine Science will receive an extra \$163.4 million in the federal budget in May.

During a visit to the AIMS headquarters in Townsville in April, Ms Plibersek said this funding will save 100 existing jobs and create over 100 jobs, mostly in regional Queensland, while making an additional 66 jobs permanent.

FFVs “raping” Torres Strait, claims Senator



NORTH Queensland-based Senator, and Shadow Minister for Northern Australia, Susan McDonald, has called on State and Federal Labor Governments to outline how and how quickly they plan to address reports of foreign-owned fishing vessels “raping” Torres Strait waters of seafood and pushing out Indigenous fishermen.

Senator McDonald said Torres Strait fishermen had told of foreign vessels exceeding catch limits and crowding out the local operators.

“They say that since Border Force patrol ships pulled out of the area during Covid, as many as 80 Chinese-sponsored commercial boats from Papua New Guinea have been raping the area, taking crayfish and sea cucumber as well as protected dugong and turtles.

“There are also reports of an increase in illegal vessels from Indonesia fishing Australia’s northern waters with impunity.”

Senator McDonald said the situation made a mockery of the Federal Government’s approach to northern border security.

“Authorities have acknowledged the Indigenous fishermen’s concerns and said patrols would be stepped up but there needs to be more urgency shown and a clear picture provided so we have confidence something will be done.”

Senator McDonald added increased foreign activity in the Strait raised questions about biosecurity and over-fishing.

“Tuberculosis is a big concern for humans, and lumpy skin disease hitting cattle here from Indonesia would devastate our northern beef sector.

“And while Australian fishers operate under strict quotas and increasing regulation, it is appalling that foreign vessels can just take what they want,” she said.

“Queensland and Federal Labor must do more to protect and support the North.”

New projects for “ghost nets”

ENVIRONMENT Minister Tanya Plibersek has announced new projects to help detect, remove or dispose of “ghost nets” in northern Queensland waters.

“Every year, lost or abandoned fishing gear drifts into the Gulf of Carpentaria,” the Minister said recently. “These nets can be more than six kilometres long, weigh over 10 tonnes, and travel great distances with the tides and ocean currents.

“Ghost nets are a dangerous menace for turtles, dolphins, sharks, seals, and other fish. Endangered animals swim into the nets and then become entangled, lacerated, or strangled by them. Nylon ghost nets are also a major contributor to the global crisis of ocean plastics, taking hundreds of years to break down.

“This grant program is part of a broader \$14.8 million package to help protect our unique marine habitats and wildlife. So far under the program, 195 ghost nets have been removed from the Gulf of Carpentaria, along with over 50,000 kg of marine debris.” Ms Plibersek said the five new projects in Queensland, which range in value up to \$400,000, include:

- ❑ establishing a Torres Strait Marine Debris Taskforce, including appointing a Marine Debris Coordinator to work with project partners on technology, such as drones, GPS technology and data collection software to better manage waste;
- ❑ removing and recycling crab traps and other accumulated fishing debris from key locations in the Gulf of Carpentaria, such as Karumba, using MICROfactorie technology;
- ❑ an Indigenous women’s social enterprise and digital marketplace to trade ghost net artworks and raw materials and to raise awareness of ghost nets;



- ❑ developing an artificial intelligence model to detect ghost nets and other marine debris from satellite imagery, enhancing the capacity of local teams to track and remove the waste; and
- ❑ enabling Traditional Owners, Indigenous artists and rangers to share their cultural and environmental knowledge of the ghost nets problem at Melbourne Design Week.

Improving GBR water quality

THE Federal Government is investing \$150 million with a new program to boost efforts to improve the quality of water flowing to the Great Barrier Reef.

Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek said the funds will support a new program to repair land in catchments that have the largest amount of fine sediment flowing into the rivers that lead to the Reef.

“Projects will include fencing, revegetation, grazing management of cattle, and structural works to stabilise gullies and riverbanks,” the Minister said.

“The program will also work with Traditional Owners and First Nations groups to identify projects and support them to care for Country.

Ms Plibersek said poor water quality is one of the largest threats to the health of the Reef.

“This not only affects seagrasses, mangroves and the species that rely on the Reef, it compromises the Reef’s resilience to threats like climate change.”

She said the program delivers on Labor’s election commitment to improve water quality in the GBR and will be carried out in collaboration with the Queensland Government.

Seafood industry angry at Federal Government adopting activists' plan for Macquarie Island Marine Park

The national seafood industry has reacted angrily to the Federal Government's adoption of a plan developed by environmental activists for an expanded marine park in sub-Antarctic waters round Macquarie Island.

SEAFOOD industry representatives say sustainable fisheries have been targeted in "a baseless ocean-grab", following the February announcement of plans for an expanded marine park round Macquarie Island.

National seafood producers Austral Fisheries and Australian Longline Fishing (ALF), along with Seafood Industry Australia, the national peak body representing Australia's commercial seafood industry, and the Commonwealth Fisheries Association, the peak-body representing commercial fisheries in Australia's Commonwealth waters, issued a joint statement condemning the plan.

"The Albanese Government's announced restructure of the Macquarie Island Marine Park ... is an ocean-grab funded by international activists with no basis in science, designed to tarnish the sustainably-managed Toothfish Fishery," they said.

Austral CEO David Carter said: "Tragically, Minister for the Environment Tanya Plibersek has chosen to use a proposal funded and driven by an international activist group, Pew Charitable Trusts, rather than a proper Australian Government review.

"The redesign of the park represents a serious overreach by the Minister that will send shockwaves through the Australian communities and regions who rely on marine estates for employment, tourism and recreation."

Seafood Industry Association (SIA) CEO Veronica Papacosta said: "This is nothing more than a green-washed PR stunt designed to garner the support of the Greens and teal-independents, while making the eNGOs, the environmental non-government organisations, happy.

"The process of the Government using submissions and plans developed by international activists sets a terrifying basis for future land and ocean conservation. If this is a process that will be relied upon by the Albanese Government, then the Australian public and industry requires transparency of this process and how, if at all, it works

with existing and endorsed scientific reviews.

"Australia's primary producers should be extremely concerned by the precedent today's announcement sets and the ability for a sitting Minister's agenda to be hijacked by conservation activists."

Commonwealth Fisheries Association (CFA) Chair George Kailis said: "As part of the proposed Macquarie Island Marine Park restructure, grounds that include the current fishing footprint will be categorised as 'category four'.

"This means, although these areas are technically a marine park zone, they will still permit commercial longline fishing.

"Austral and ALF represent the only industry members operating within the Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery, who will now be forced into taking fish from Marine Parks, despite both operations being classed as sustainable by the Australian Government and independent third-parties.

"This has poor optics for the businesses and their international trade, and means the clock is ticking for further reduced access in the future.

"This move sends a chilling message to the investment made on environmental and sustainable practices, as demonstrated by both companies," Dr Kailis said.

Australian Longline Fishing (ALF) Managing Director Malcolm McNeill said: "Since 1994, Austral and ALF have supported a collaborative approach to ensuring the entire Macquarie Island ecosystem, including its commercial fishery, is sustainably managed through research, science, industry and conservation inputs, and evidence-based decision making,

"Despite promises to meaningfully engage with industry during the formal review process, the proposed new park boundaries and zone categorisations announced today do not take the views, contributions, or priorities of longstanding fishers into account," Mr McNeill said.

"During a number of informal meetings, industry views were tabled, and a design developed that was done in good faith to deliver a truly exceptional, world class outcome giving the highest level of protection to 85% of the entire Macquarie Island Exclusive Economic Zone, however, this design appears to have been ignored," Mr Carter said.

"Macquarie Island is a special part of the world, and the original Marine Park was established in 1999 with full support of industry, science, conservation, and government."

"Both ALF and Austral have conducted valuable research over almost 30 years, gaining insights, data and IP throughout this time, which was not accessed or utilised during the formal review," Mr McNeill said.

"The new boundaries will create increased complexity and red tape for operators and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority, the government fisheries regulator, with no change to the conservation outcome. It will also remove sustainable fishing activity from parts of the existing fishing footprint."

"As an industry that already faces significant scrutiny, this reclassification makes legal fishing operators an easy target for extreme groups, and will ultimately confuse the public, mislead consumers, and adversely impact the commercial viability of this fishery," Mr McNeill said.

The industry joint statement said the message this decision sends is that the Albanese Government and Minister Plibersek value international activist submissions over collaboration between Australian industry, science, conservation, and government.

"This announcement also flags the commencement of the South-east Marine Parks Network Management Plan 2013-2023 review. If we're going into an environment where actually our concerns, our needs, and our performance aren't taken into account, we have a real issue.

"Australia has the largest network of Marine Parks in the world, with 45 per cent of our waters declared, in fact 48.2



Two of the vessels operating in the Macquarie Island region: Antarctic Aurora (top) and Antarctic Discovery. (Photos: Australian Longline Fishing.)

per cent including this announcement. This is well above the international target of 30 per cent by 2030. This protects an area of 744,000 square kilometres and reinforces Australia's global leadership in ocean protection.

“Moves like this unjustly damage the livelihood, reputation and hard work of tens of thousands of hard-working Australians who work in and rely on our seafood industry. And, they have documented and broad reaching impacts on the mental health of our sector.”

Minister's statement

Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek announced on February 23 that the Albanese Labor Government planned to triple the size of the Macquarie Island Marine Park to protect the entire Exclusive Economic Zone around the island – an area more than twice the size of Victoria.

This proposed expansion would bring our marine parks to 48.2 per cent of Australian oceans, Ms Plibersek said.

“The new park will also achieve a globally significant contribution to marine conservation, increasing the area of Australia's waters under high protection by over 388,000 square kilometres, an increase larger than the area of Germany.”

“This is an important contribution to our commitment to protect 30 per cent of our land and 30 per cent of our oceans by 2030.”

The proposed design would also support the continuation of the small and sustainable Macquarie Island Toothfish Fishery, she said.

Activists' statement

Meanwhile, activists behind the plan issued their own statement, welcoming the Federal Government announcement.

They said the alliance of 27 leading environment groups “has welcomed the Albanese Government's announcement to increase protection for Australia's World Heritage-listed Macquarie Island”.

They added that the Pew Charitable Trusts and the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) lead the Save Our Marine Life alliance.

SOML supports fishing bans in Queensland

THE Save Our Marine Life (SOML) alliance that pushed for the expanded marine park round Macquarie Island is currently supporting commercial fishing bans in Queensland.

The SOML alliance – led by the US-based Pew Charitable Trusts and the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS) – is currently generating public support for the Queensland Government's proposed expanded fishing bans in the Great Sandy Marine Park.

Its submission to the Queensland Government in support of the proposed bans says that “allowing commercial gillnet fishing in the Conservation Park (CP) Zones known as the designated Great Sandy Area completely undermines the conservation value of this zoning”.

Fiona Maxwell, the National Oceans Manager for The Pew Charitable Trusts, said: “Federal Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek's announcement today opens the door to a once-in-a-decade opportunity to increase protection for one of the most unique environments on the planet.

“In 1999, a Commonwealth marine park was established in waters off Macquarie's south-east. But now, 24 years later, the marine park is well overdue for renewal as our understanding of the incredible values of the region, and the threats it faces, have changed significantly.

“The Albanese Government's proposal ensures the region gets the level of protection it deserves, while continuing to accommodate the small footprint of the existing, relatively well-managed and sustainable commercial fishery.”

Australian Marine Conservation Society Campaigns Director Tooni Mahto said: “The proposed expansion of Macquarie Island Marine Park will be a major contribution towards international efforts to conserve the Southern Ocean.

“Globally, our oceans are in big trouble. Across the Southern Ocean, temperatures are rising and the rate of ice loss has tripled, with much of this occurring during the past five years. Industrial fisheries are damaging areas of high biodiversity and food chains.”

SOML claims that: “Destructive gillnet fishing has impacted threatened species, such as dugong and turtles, and taken a huge toll on fish populations.

“With only a small percentage of the total marine park fully protected, the impacts are mounting and there are noteworthy signs of decline.”

This same group has campaigned for total fishing bans throughout the almost one million square kilometre Coral Sea Marine Park.

Following the Federal Government's announcement about its plan to triple the size of Macquarie Island Marine Park – which was developed in consultation with Save Our Marine Life but blindsided the seafood industry – fishermen throughout Australia will be concerned about what secret behind-closed-doors discussions SOML might be having with the Environment Minister about other areas.

WHITE SPOT DISEASE

White spot disease found in NSW prawn farms – trawlers tied up

White spot disease has been found in northern New South Wales prawn farms and trawlers have been tied up as a result.

WHITE spot disease – fatal to prawns and other crustaceans – is now affecting prawn farms at Yamba in northern New South Wales.

At least two NSW prawn farms have been devastated by the deadly disease, with reports a third might also have been impacted.

The NSW Department of Primary Industries (DPI) has extended restrictions on prawn harvesting and sales, including trawl-caught prawns.

Media reports say white spot disease (WSD) has spread to two prawn farms near Yamba, at the mouth of the Clarence River on the New South Wales North Coast.

As a result, trawl fishermen in the Clarence River – where ports like Yamba, Iluka and Maclean are major

prawn producers – have stopped work while movement restrictions are in place

NSW Chief Veterinary Officer Sarah Britton was reported as saying the



A prawn showing obvious signs of white spot disease.

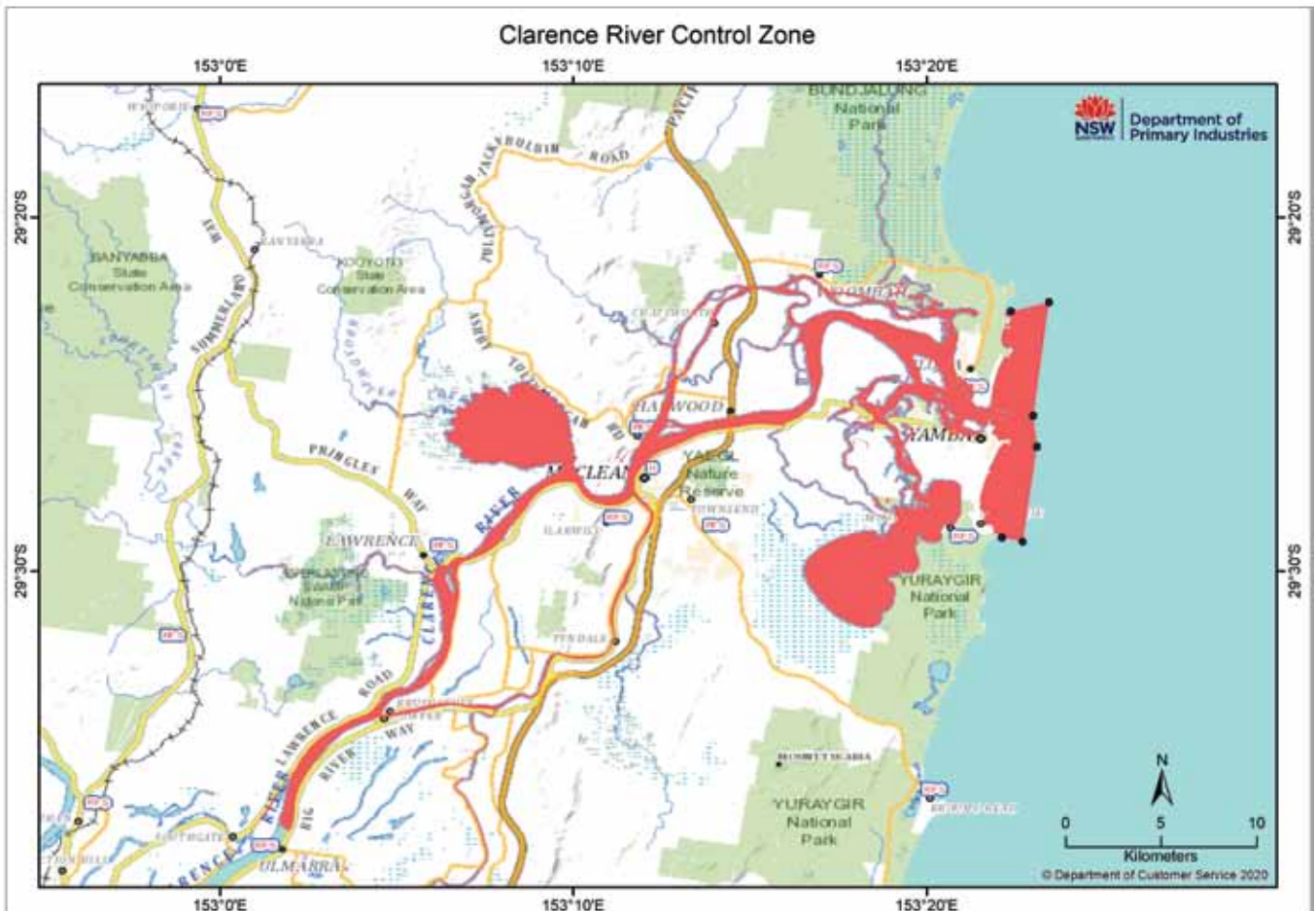
measures are necessary “to allow for more information to be gathered”.

Overall, this is the third case in the region since WSD was first detected there in August last year.

The latest case was detected on February 25, following another on February 12.

The disease, first seen in Queensland in 2016, is primarily spread through the movement of infected animals or contaminated water.

It is believed that birds feeding on



Movement restrictions apply to the prawn industry in the Clarence River region. (Supplied: NSW DPI)



Trawling bans have seen trawlers tied up in the Clarence River.

and travelling with infected prawns can also spread the disease.

“The infected properties that we’re seeing this year in February have genetically similar relationship to the one that we saw in August 2022 but it’s very dissimilar to what we saw in Queensland and it’s also different to any other testing we’ve done previously,” Dr Britton said.

The August outbreak occurred in a hatchery in Yamba that supplies prawn farms.

That outbreak was contained, but the latest test results have raised more questions about the source of the infection at all three sites, according to Dr Britton.

“We were certainly able to rule out feed and movement and other ways to bring it in, and we looked at brood stock (from the hatchery), which do enter these facilities, but they do get tested extensively before they come in,” she said.

Call to ban imports

Local fishing industry representatives have called on the Federal Government to stop imports of prawns from countries where white spot is endemic.

White spot disease is widespread throughout prawn farming regions in Asia and the Americas, where it has caused severe losses on prawn farms.

This demand comes as domestic prawn farmers and fishermen face another month of movement restrictions on uncooked decapod crustaceans.

Damien Moran from the Clarence River Fishermen’s Cooperative was

reported by media at the time as saying it was a major problem for the region’s 26 prawn trawler fishermen.

“They’re not working at the moment and the throughput of prawns has stopped,” he said. “We can only move prawn locally, and it’s quite a big business for us here.”

About a tonne of prawns are usually caught in the region per day. Large numbers of prawns have also been destroyed to eradicate the disease from aquaculture ponds.

Dr Britton said the control order had to be extended to allow more testing to be done.

“It enables us to work out what the connections, links, sources, the surveillance that’s required, or the information we have to pull together to inform the long-term management,” she said.

Prawns and polychaete worms may only be moved out of the Clarence River control zone if they have been cooked and there are exemptions for certain uncooked decapod seafood species, such as crabs and lobsters, which can be moved out of the zone for the purpose of human consumption only. They have to be cooked as soon as possible once they get to their destination.

Compensation call

Tricia Beatty from the NSW Professional Fishers Association has called for compensation for Clarence fishermen.

Ms Beatty said the fishermen in the Clarence Valley were finding it difficult.

“A year ago they were doing it tough

with La Niña, the floods, the impact of COVID restrictions, everything that was hitting everybody. But then to top it with this situation as well, it’s crippling them,” she said.

“Going into Easter has normally been a profitable time for our industry and it’s been wiped out now. It’s really difficult for them.”

The Office of Federal Minister for Agriculture Murray Watt said in a statement that New South Wales was the lead agency on the outbreak and “they can raise the question of joint compensation with the Federal Government”.

The then NSW Agriculture Minister Dugald Saunders said he would do that. (The State Government changed from Coalition to Labor after the election in March.)

Ms Beatty told the ABC she was aware of studies that proved recreational fishermen were using imported prawns as bait.

“They’re going to Woolworths and Coles and buying their green prawns there and using it in our waterways,” she said.

“There’s so many viruses and diseases in uncooked seafood, it’s a risk to all of our ecosystems.”

Ms Beatty said the industry had been calling for a ban on imported uncooked seafood for 20 years because of the risk of bringing in exotic diseases.

“The Commonwealth Government’s always said to us that ‘Oh, it’s a low risk, not many people would do so’, but our argument back then was ‘You may consider it a low risk but the consequence of this type of situation is enormous’,” she said.

“White spot is a pussycat compared to a number of viruses and diseases that are out there on our doorstep, in Asia, that could be potentially brought in through uncooked seafood.

“The Commonwealth Government does check small samples from imports but it’s not 100 per cent, it’s not every single thing being checked.

“White spot is nothing compared to other diseases that are out there like yellow head which could potentially wipe out our entire platypus population.”

MARKETING NEWS

Signs of a new era for Sydney Fish Market

SYDNEY Fish Market is celebrating a new era for Australia's "Home of Seafood", launching a new brand identity to signify the transformational journey of the market.

Sydney Fish Market CEO Greg Dyer said the brand launch recognises the legacy that the iconic organisation was built on, and the critical role it plays in delivering sustainable growth for the seafood industry and opportunities for its fishers and people.

"Sydney Fish Market has more than 70 years' experience and expertise in large-scale, high-quality seafood trading, during which time it has played a significant role in growing Australia's seafood industry," Mr Dyer said.

"We are immensely proud of our heritage, with half a century of history woven into the fabric of the market since first opening at our current location at Blackwattle Bay in 1966. And now, with the launch of our new

branding, we step into a new chapter of Sydney Fish Market."

Mr Dyer said the well-known physical transformation of the market continues to progress, with the NSW Government reimagining the iconic site to create a Sydney Fish Market for the future with world-class facilities, set to open in 2024.

"Designed by renowned architects 3XN, the facility will be a purpose-built, authentic operating fish market, and a major food and dining attraction on Sydney's inner harbour.

"The new logo takes inspiration from design of the building, with its distinctive wave-shaped roof that pays homage to the ocean and fishing industry.

"Coupled with a new colour palette, photography and illustrations, the brand comes to life, exemplifying the dynamic relationship between the land and sea in which the market operates." Mr Dyer said the Sydney Fish Market's redevelopment represents a \$750 million injection of support into the national seafood industry.

"This is an invaluable opportunity for Sydney Fish Market to revitalise our brand to reflect this impressive piece of architecture and leverage the



significant investment from the NSW Government to strengthen pride in the Australian seafood industry."

He said another transformative project has been the launch of Sydney Fish Market's digital trading platform, SFMblue.

"Launched in September, the online seafood marketplace was designed to help future-proof the industry and modernise the way Sydney Fish Market facilitates seafood industry trading.

"The platform connects more sellers to more buyers across the country, facilitating trading 24-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week to complement the vibrant physical market."

Further information: www.sydneyfishmarket.com.au/



This aerial photo of the Sydney Fish Market (snapped from an arriving Qantas flight) shows the reclaimed site of the new market complex to be completed next year.

AWARDS

Ron Boswell recognised

FORMER Senator Ron Boswell has been inducted into the Australian Seafood Industry Hall of Fame. Ron was recognised for 40 years' involvement with the seafood industry.

In his 32 years as a Nationals Senator for Queensland, Ron frequently defended the industry from unreasonable demands by politicians in both the Labor and Greens parties and in his own Coalition parties.

His work included engineering more than \$200 million in compensation for both on-water and on-shore seafood businesses severely impacted by rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in the early 2000s.

After leaving politics in mid-2014, Ron went on to become Chairman of the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC).

He has now retired from the FRDC role to write a book on his decades in politics but maintains a keen interest in the seafood industry – not only occasionally observing the activities of beam trawlers working city reaches of the Brisbane River near his waterfront unit but also advising currently serving politicians on national issues.

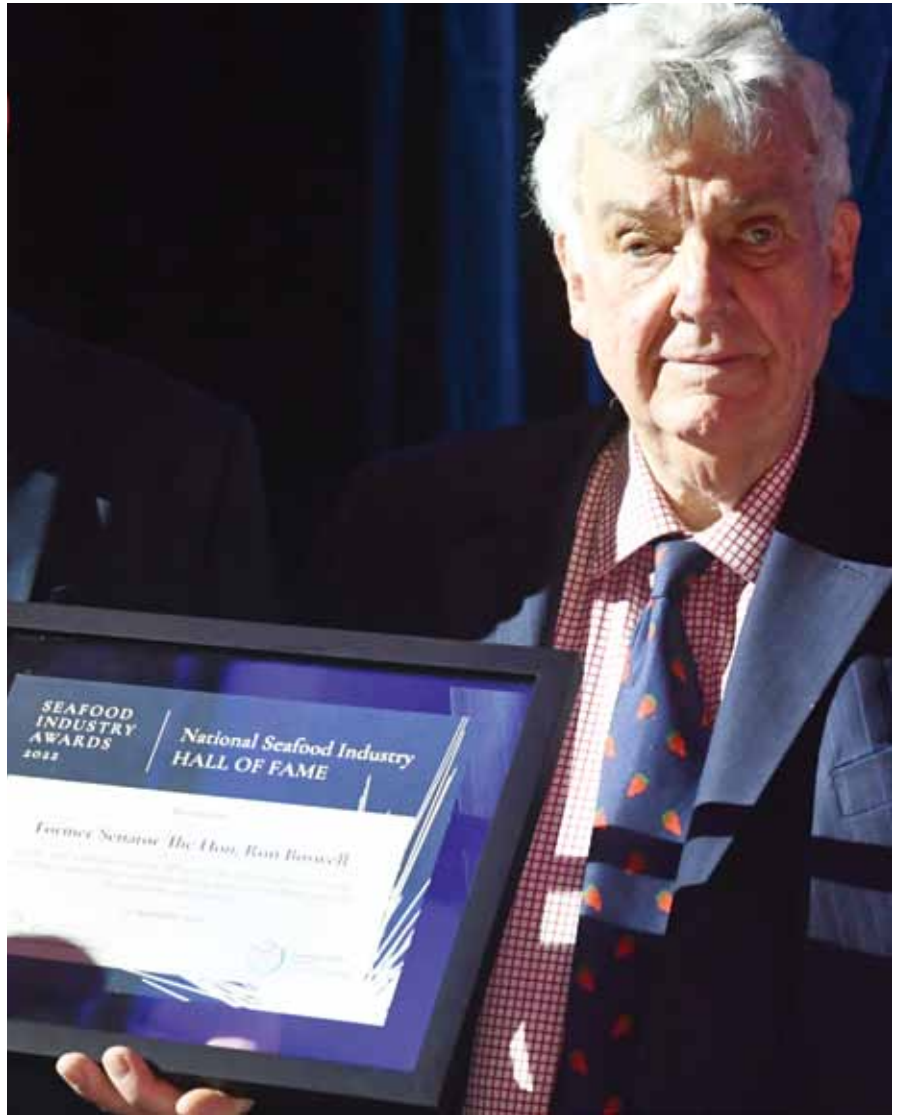
Ron explained recently that his interest in fish and fishing was generated by growing up around Moreton Bay and spending a lot of time on the water.

"I always knew how important recreational fishing was to so many people in south-east Queensland and throughout the rest of Queensland as well," he said.

"I had also seen the commercial fishing industry at work in Moreton Bay and elsewhere, and valued the opportunity to buy products like prawns, bugs and other seafood I couldn't catch myself.

"Then, in the early 1980s, before I entered the Senate, Premier Sir Joh Bjelke-Petersen asked me to examine the then Queensland Fish Board and its regulated seafood marketing system.

"This gave me opportunity to examine the fishing industry in detail and develop an even better understanding of the challenges facing working fishermen. The rest is history."



Former Senator Ron Boswell has been inducted into the National Seafood Industry Hall of Fame.

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Research links Omega-3s to improved brain structure and cognitive function at midlife

Middle-aged people whose blood contains higher levels of Omega-3 oils – best derived from oily fish – have better brain health and reasoning power, according to research from the United States.

THE results of a study of healthy volunteers in their 40s and 50s has been published in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

The Faculty of The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio (UT Health San Antonio) and other investigators of the broader Framingham Heart Study conducted the analysis.

Claudia Satizabal, lead author of the research paper, said: “Studies have looked at this association in older populations.

“The new contribution here is that, even at younger ages, if you have a diet that includes some Omega-3 fatty acids, you are already protecting your brain for most of the indicators of brain aging that we see at middle age.”

Dr Satizabal is Assistant Professor of Population Health Sciences with the Glenn Biggs Institute for Alzheimer’s & Neurodegenerative Diseases at UT Health San Antonio.

Volunteers’ average age was 46. The team looked at the relation of red blood cell Omega-3 fatty acid concentrations with multiple-resonance imaging (MRI) and cognitive markers of brain aging.

Researchers also studied the effect of Omega-3 red blood cell concentrations in volunteers who carried APOE4, a genetic variation linked to higher risk of Alzheimer’s disease.

The study of 2,183 dementia- and stroke-free participants found that:

Higher Omega-3 index was associated with larger hippocampal volumes. The hippocampus is a structure in the brain that plays a major role in learning and memory.

Consuming more Omega-3s was associated with better abstract reasoning, or the ability to understand complex concepts using logical thinking.

APOE4 carriers with a higher Omega-3 index had less small-vessel disease. The APOE4 gene is associated

with cardiovascular disease and vascular dementia.

Researchers used a technique called gas chromatography to measure docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) concentrations from red blood cells. The Omega-3 index was calculated as DHA plus EPA.

“Omega-3 fatty acids such as EPA and DHA are key micro-nutrients that enhance and protect the brain,” said study co-author Debora Melo van Lent, postdoctoral research fellow at the Biggs Institute.

“Our study is one of the first to observe this effect in a younger population. More studies in this age group are needed.”

The team divided participants into those who had very little Omega-3 red blood cell concentration and those who had at least a little and more.

“We saw the worst outcomes in the people who had the lowest consumption of Omega-3s,” Dr Satizabal said. “So, that is something interesting. Although the more Omega-3 the more benefits for the brain, you just need to eat some to see benefits.”

Researchers do not know how DHA and EPA protect the brain. One theory is that, because those fatty acids are needed in the membrane of neurons (nerve cells), when they are replaced with other types of fatty acids, that is when neurons become unstable.

Another explanation may have to do with the anti-inflammatory properties of DHA and EPA.

“It’s complex. We don’t understand everything yet but we show that, somehow, if you increase your consumption of Omega-3s even by a little bit, you are protecting your brain,” Dr Satizabal said.

It is considered encouraging that DHA and EPA also protected APOE4 carriers’ brain health.

“It’s genetics, so you can’t change it,” Dr SMelo van Lent said, referring to

the vulnerability of this risk group. “So, if there is a modifiable risk factor that can outweigh genetic predisposition, that’s a big gain.”

Study of older adults

An earlier 2018 study examined the effects of Omega-3 on the health of older adults and the findings support guidelines for increased consumption of seafood.

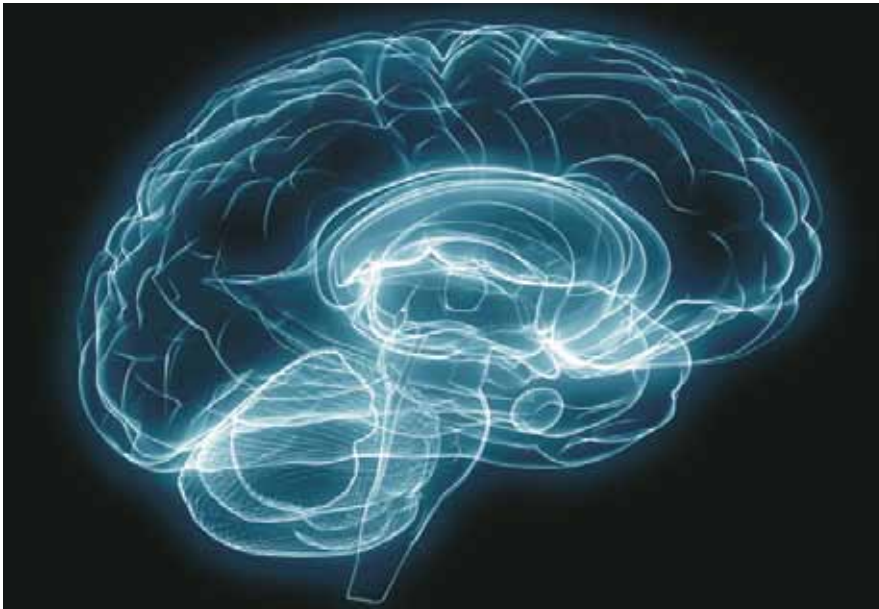
Higher blood levels of Omega-3 fatty acids found in seafood are associated with a higher likelihood of healthy ageing among older adults, according to the US study published by *The British Medical Journal* (BMJ).

With populations across the world living longer, there is a growing focus on healthy ageing -- a meaningful lifespan without major chronic diseases and with good physical and mental function.

Previous studies suggest that Omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids derived from seafood and plants may have beneficial effects on the body that could promote healthy ageing, but results are inconsistent.



Eating fish like Spanish mackerel, high in beneficial Omega-3 oil, has proven benefits for the brain.



APOE 4 gene explanation

THE APOE 4 gene increases risk for Alzheimer's disease and is also associated with an earlier age of disease onset.

Having one or two APOE 4 alleles increases the risk of developing Alzheimer's. About 25 per cent of people carry one copy of APOE 4, and 2 to 3 percent carry two copies.

APOE ε4 is called a "risk-factor

So a team of US researchers, led by Heidi Lai at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science & Policy at Tufts University in Boston, set out to investigate the association between circulating blood levels of Omega-3 PUFAs and healthy ageing among older adults.

The study involved 2,622 adults who were taking part in the US Cardiovascular Health study from 1992 to 2015. Average age of participants at the start of the study (baseline) was 74 years, 63 per cent were women and 11 per cent were from non-white groups.

Blood levels of Omega-3 PUFAs were measured at baseline, six years and 13 years. These included eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), docosapentaenoic acid (DPA), and alpha linolenic acid (ALA). The main dietary sources of EPA, DHA and DPA come from seafood, while ALA is found mainly in plants (nuts, seeds, and leafy green vegetables).

Based on these measurements, participants were split into five groups (quintiles) of circulating blood Omega-3 PUFA levels, from lowest to highest.

gene" because it increases a person's risk of developing the disease.

However, inheriting an APOE 4 allele does not mean that a person will definitely develop Alzheimer's.

Some people with an APOE 4 allele never get the disease, and others who develop Alzheimer's do not have any APOE 4 alleles.

NIH National Institute on Aging

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-disease-genetics-fact-sheet>

Through review of medical records and diagnostic tests, the researchers found that 89 per cent of the participants experienced unhealthy ageing over the study period, while 11 per cent experienced healthy ageing -- defined as survival free of major chronic diseases and without mental or physical dysfunction.

After taking account of a range of other social, economic, and lifestyle factors, the researchers found that levels of seafood-derived EPA in the highest quintile were associated with a 24 per cent lower risk of unhealthy ageing than levels in the lowest quintile.

For DPA levels, the top three quintiles were associated with an 18-21 per cent reduction in the risk of unhealthy ageing. However, seafood-derived DHA and plant-derived ALA were not associated with healthy ageing.

A possible explanation for this effect is that Omega-3 PUFAs help to regulate blood pressure, heart rate and inflammation, the authors explain.

They point out that this was an

observational study, so no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect, and they cannot rule out the possibility that some of the observed risk may be due to other unmeasured factors.

The study had a long (up to 22 years) follow-up period, and results remained largely unchanged after further analyses.

As such, they say that, among older adults, higher levels of circulating Omega-3 PUFAs from seafood were associated with a lower risk of unhealthy ageing.

"These findings encourage the need for further investigations into plausible biological mechanisms and interventions related to Omega-3 PUFAs for maintenance of healthy ageing, and support guidelines for increased dietary consumption of fish among older adults," they conclude.

In a linked editorial, Professor Yeyi Zhu at Kaiser Permanente Northern California Division of Research and the University of California and colleagues said this study makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the effect Omega-3 PUFAs might have on ageing.

"We live in challenging times, when lifespans are increasing but healthy lifespans are not," they write. "Following the World Health Organization's policy framework for healthy ageing, any evidence-based clues to improve health in later life are welcome but additional efforts to accelerate this area of research are essential," they conclude.

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SEAFOOD PROMOTION

Parliament House seafood barbecue wows federal polities and national media

Seafood has been successfully promoted to media and politicians in Canberra again this past summer with a well-attended barbecue in the grounds of Parliament House.

As usual, hundreds of journalists, photographers and cameramen, plus Parliamentarians from across the country, consumed tens of kilos of seafood (much of it from Queensland waters).

At the same time, they also took the opportunity to talk to seafood industry members about current issues.

The barbecue – held every year, Covid-19 permitting – always provides a great venue to discuss industry issues in a light-hearted atmosphere with politicians and the media, discussions that can be built on over the following 12 months.

This seafood barbecue is hosted by the Nationals party for the Press Gallery media folk during the final

parliamentary sittings for the calendar year and it has become one of the most-anticipated events in the Parliament House calendar.

It was commenced by then Senator Ron Boswell and NT Senator Nigel Scullion but, with their retirement, is now hosted by CQ-based Senator Matt Canavan and former Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce, with the



Members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery and federal politicians alike have flocked to the annual seafood barbecue hosted by the Nationals.

strong support of senior colleagues.

This time, some 400 journalists, photographers and cameramen, Parliamentarians and political staffers filed past barbecue plates in a grassy courtyard in the grounds of Parliament House, and piled their plates with seafood and salads.

Chefs serving from the barbecue plates included: Nationals parliamentary leader David Littleproud; Liberal Opposition Leader Peter Dutton; Barnaby Joyce; Matt Canavan; Rockhampton-based MP Michelle Landry; Townsville-based Senator Susan McDonald; NT Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price; David Gillespie, MP for Lynne (an electorate on the NSW mid-north coast); and former federal fisheries minister Senator Richard Colbeck from Tasmania.

And shoulder-to-shoulder with them at the barbecue plates were industry reps that included Grahame Turk and Greg Dyer from the Sydney Fish Market (SFM).

Generous quantities of product were donated to the event by the Sydney Fish Market, Nick Schulz from Urangan Fisheries, Stephen Murphy from the Australian Ocean King Prawn Company at Urangan, John and Lillian Lever from the Koorana Crocodile Farm at Rockhampton, and Luke McKenzie from IGA Supermarkets.

This promotional event would not happen without the support of fishing businesses.

Seafood on offer this year included king prawns from Queensland and New South Wales, Moreton Bay bugs and tropical barramundi, plus farmed crocodile.

While the barbecue is hosted by the Nationals, it is becoming increasingly non-political, with a number of Liberal, Labor and smaller-party MPs spotted in the queue for the generous quantities of cold and freshly-cooked seafood on offer.

In speeches at the event, Mr Dutton and Mr Littleproud both praised the quality of the seafood on offer – plus the economic contribution of the industry to regional, State and national economies from sustainably-sourced seafood.

Once again, the Press Gallery barbecue was a very positive public relations and promotional event for our industry, courtesy of some seafood-loving Members of Parliament and the continuing generosity of the businesses involved.



Chefs on the day included (from left) Opposition leader Peter Dutton, then Sydney Fish Market (SFM) Chair Grahame Turk, Nationals leader David Littleproud and SFM CEO Greg Dyer.



Representing Northern Australia (from left): NT Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price; Rockhampton-based Senator Matt Canavan; and Townsville-based Senator Susan McDonald.



It was standing-room-only for media reps at the seafood barbecue, with hundreds of people attending the event.

Sea Safe national safety program launched

A NATIONAL seafood industry program – Sea Safe – has been launched by Seafood Industry Australia (SIA).

Sea Safe Program Manager Jo Marshall says the primary objective is to measurably improve personal safety culture and outcomes in the Australian seafood industry through an industry-led behavioural change approach underpinned by a national engagement process.

“Engagement will occur at all levels of Industry to ensure that sustainable culture change is driven through shifts in core beliefs from leadership (top-down) as well as grassroots and peer-to-peer (bottom-up),” she says.

“Everyone from the owner to junior and even volunteers is responsible for keeping themselves and each other safe. By leveraging and deepening existing relationships at all levels of Industry, behaviours at every level will shift as a result of educational, experiential and peer-to-peer learning and influence.

“Goals are to:

- ❑ measurably reduce the number of injuries and incidents across the seafood sector (and improve reporting of incidents and injuries, noting that an increase in reported incidents and injuries may occur in the short to medium term, with ultimate reductions in actual damages and deaths being the long-term measure); demonstrate a shift in sentiment, values and behaviours towards safe practices across industry;
- ❑ establish a recognised culture of safety and support all seafood industry sub-sectors demonstrated through shifts in sentiment around safety values and activities via SenseMaker and also through other identified measures of industry information (such as Seafood Industry Australia [SIA] member forums and other industry information collection to be recognised as part of Program Logic); and
- ❑ demonstrate the ability of industry to be a significant strategic partner in strategic planning and implementation for safety regulation and practice moving forward through creating a national safety framework for the future.”

Program Pillars and Activities

- ❑ Safety Communities
- ❑ Continuous Culture Building
- ❑ Focus initiatives
- ❑ Technology and Innovation

Safety Communities

It is planned to establish up to 50 Safety Communities across Australia, with:

- ❑ at least one Safety Advocate in each community;
- ❑ Safety Advocates responsible for collecting stories and knowledge from local industry and their sub-sector;
- ❑ Safety Advocates share stories, experiences and tools with other industry members to promote behaviour and culture change towards safer practices in their community and sector; and
- ❑ Safety Advocates have various methods and amounts of commitment depending on their needs and normal ways of interacting with others. (This is about building safety messaging into what’s already happening – not about creating more new activity and effort.)

Continuous Culture Building

This is a peer to peer behaviour change program. The change program is built around understanding and acceptance that behaviour change is a process. Stories, examples and experiences will be shared to support people to move through the stages of behaviour change such that they make change that they are motivated to do. This means that people become more willing in their compliance and practices, leading to more sustainable and values based culture of safety.

Part of continuous culture building is the integration of the FishSafe and SeSafe programs into the Sea Safe program. Support for commercial fishers to establish Safety Management Systems has been developed through the FishSafe program which will transition into the Sea Safe program this year. There are also 42 different training modules that were developed as part of the SeSafe program.

Focus Initiatives

SIA will work with the Steering Committee, sector experts and suppliers to define a number of meaningful focus initiatives where a significant shift in safety behaviours can be achieved through a focussed approach on a single initiative.

Innovation and Technology

Stories and sentiment will be captured using Sensemaking technology which greatly simplifies the way that stories are collected and shared, and greatly reduces the need for surveys and other admin based methods to track changes in sentiment and achievement of program goals.

The project team will continue to seek innovative ways of improving safety practices, making management systems easier and ensuring supply and sustainability to the program using the latest and emerging technologies. We will seek to partner with industry bodies and member organisations to embed activities in their existing technologies and platforms to make being safe easier than ever!

Other program stakeholders

This program is funded jointly by the Fisheries Research & Development Corporation (FRDC) and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA), who are considered program partners and are invited to take a seat at the Steering Committee table in addition to their roles on SISI.

The Steering Committee is made up of a range of industry stakeholders, all of whom have a deep understanding of the practicalities and challenges of safety in their sub-sector of industry.

Further information: Jo Marshall, Sea Safe Program Manager on 0408 008 344 or jo@seafoodindustryaustralia.com.au

AMSA launching inspection blitz on maintenance

THE Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) has announced it will conduct a “focused inspection campaign” (FIC) on planned maintenance requirements for domestic commercial vessels throughout May and June.

An AMSA statement said marine Inspectors will have an increased focus on how vessel structure, machinery, safety equipment and certification has been maintained and documented, as required under Marine Order 504 (Certificates of operation and operational requirements).

Further information: “AMSA Update newsletter”, <https://www.amsa.gov.au/news-community/newsletters>

BOATS & GEAR

Boat Show at Gold Coast May 25 - 28

THE Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show (SCIBS) is on again this year from May 25 to 28.

Presented at Sanctuary Cove on the Gold Coast by Mulpha Events, SCIBS 2023 will feature a big line-up of exhibitors across everything from superyachts and other stylish white boats to trailer boats to the latest marine gadgets and must-have technology.

Mulpha Events General Manager Johan Hasser said SCIBS 2023 has seen an enormous demand from premium boating brands lining up to showcase their vessels and products,

“Since launching in 1988, the Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show has evolved to become Australia’s largest boating showcase, featuring more than 330 exhibitors, 600 boats on water and land, and over 1,000 marine products, and attended by more than 45,000 visitors,” Mr Hasser said.

Further information: sanctuarycoveboatshow.com.au



Forward-looking sonar makes the invisible, visible

ECHOPILOT, a division of Danish company Daniamant, specialise in designing and manufacturing forward-looking sonar products that offer an impressive depth to range ratio of up to x 20.

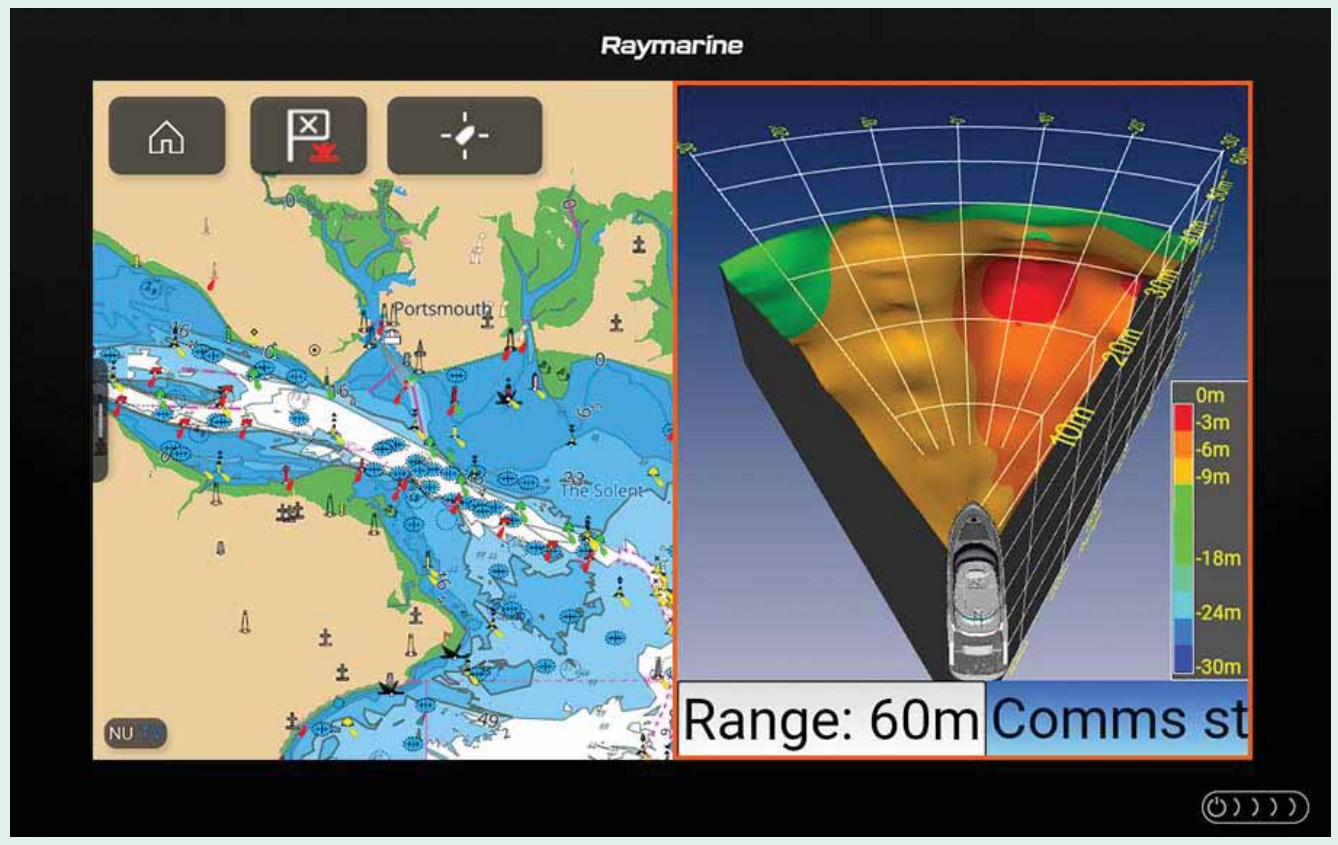
This means for only five metres of water below the boat, the product will provide underwater visibility for one hundred metres ahead. This clarity is reassuring for docking in difficult anchorages or unfamiliar ports.

A spokesperson for TMQ, EchoPilot’s Australian distributor, said they will have EchoPilot on display

at the upcoming Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show, including the FLS 3D, a product that displays a three-dimensional representation of the underwater scene below the boat, integrating easily with Raymarine’s Axiom display range.

For skippers who already have a display or PC and prefer a “blackbox” style system, EchoPilot offer FLS Engine, which enables any compatible chart plotter multifunction display or PC to become a fully functional 2D colour forward looking sonar. All systems include transducer options.

For more information, visit the TMQ website at www.tmq.com.au/echopilot, or see the AMI Group stand PR 12/13 on the Promenade at Sanctuary Cove International Boat Show.



THE GULL



Lest we forget



HAVING just recently observed Anzac Day, this is a good time to listen to a radio segment you can find on the ABC website.

It is part of the daily “Conversations” program. Just go to “ABC Conversations” and scroll through the segments till you find “The Case of the Unknown Sailor” from February 14.

It is an interview with a scientist asked by the Royal Australian Navy to help them identify the remains of an unknown sailor from World War II. The sailor was a crewman from the cruiser HMAS *Sydney*, which sank, with the loss of all 645 crew, after a battle with the German raider *Kormoran* south-west of Carnarvon in Western Australia in November 1941.

In February 1942, the remains of a sailor from HMAS *Sydney* were found floating on a life raft near Christmas Island. He was buried on the island and forgotten – until the RAN reinterred his body in the military cemetery in Geraldton, and asked a scientist – Dr Jeremy Austin from the University of Adelaide – to try to identify the mystery man via his DNA (the unique “fingerprint” material in our cells).

It took 14 years but, finally, the unknown sailor was identified thanks to detective work through DNA data bases.

The sailor was Able Seaman Thomas Welsby Clark, from a well-known Brisbane family of fishers, oyster-growers and recreational sailors. He was 21 when a piece of shrapnel killed him soon after boarding a Carley raft beside the sinking *Sydney*.

Thomas was the grandson of Thomas Welsby, a Brisbane historian and fisherman who wrote several books, including, in 1905, *Schnappering*, where he describes fishing off southern Queensland. (The stories include a trip off Caloundra in the 1890s when nine anglers boated 516 snapper between four and seven kilos each.)

The final resting places of both the *Sydney* and the *Kormoran* were discovered in 2008, about 290 km west-south-west of Carnarvon (and about 20 km apart) in 2,500 metres of water.

Thomas Clark had joined the Navy in August 1940 and was posted to the *Sydney* in August 1941, just three months before its encounter with the *Kormoran*.

On the afternoon of 19 November 1941 *Sydney* sighted the *Kormoran*, disguised as a merchant ship some 200 km west of Shark Bay.

In the battle that followed both ships were mortally damaged. The *Sydney*, torpedoed and ablaze later sank.

The crew of *Kormoran* abandoned ship before the raider was scuttled. While 80 German sailors died in the action, around three-quarters of her crew survived to become prisoners.

Of the 645 crew on *Sydney*, Thomas Welsby Clark was the only one whose body was recovered.

Lest We Forget.

White spot, again

WHITE spot disease has broken out in prawn farms near Yamba in northern New South Wales and local waters have been closed to prawn trawling as a precaution.

Once again, as happened in south-east Queensland, wild-catch fishermen are suffering real financial loss for a problem that was not of their making.

More than 15 years ago, the QSIA warned the Federal Government that diseases like white spot would be introduced into Australian waters through recreational anglers buying uncooked imported prawns (which were known to carry white spot disease, or WSD) and using them for bait in local waters.

Now it looks like it’s happened all over again.

As if trawling isn’t tough enough at

the moment, without our fellow fishers in NSW suffering closures like these ...

MSC PR post

THE Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) is looking for a public relations person.

A recent ad has been pitched at someone “looking for your next step in a communications and PR role in a purpose-led organization.

“If so,” the ad says, “join our mission to end overfishing and build public support and understanding for sustainable fishing by driving public and media interest in establishing the MSC as the authority for sustainable seafood.

“Join our creative and talented team to:

- raise awareness, understanding and preference for the MSC blue fish tick label
- activate brand and retail partners to communicate their sustainable seafood commitments
- leverage our influencers and ambassadors to increase our reach and appeal.

“Level up your PR experience with our fantastic assets, spokes-people and storytelling.” Interesting, eh.

Hysteria

THERE is a certain amount of hysteria being generated about net fishing along the Queensland north coast.

This includes a story published by the ABC in which someone talked about green turtles found washed up with missing flippers and other fatal injuries and suggesting “fishers may be illegally mutilating endangered species to attract sharks to devour the carcasses”.

Anyone familiar with turtles knows sharks, especially tiger sharks, do not need any inducement to kill turtles. Where turtles go, especially at nesting times, there go tiger sharks as well.

Google “turtles tiger sharks” and (once past the videos of a turtle dodging an attacking tiger shark) look at the research that has been conducted.

It’s hardly investigative journalism but a simple check like that by journalists might bring a bit more balance to the debate and help stop media outlets publishing outlandish claims about fishers’ behaviour.

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- Shipwrights
- Fibre Glassing & Upholstery
- Long & Short Term Storage



- 130 Berth Marina (all with power & water)
- 9m berths up to 24m
- Mens, Ladies, Disabled & Unisex Showers / Toilets



- Coin Operated Washing Machines & Dryers
- Electronic Security Keys
- Long & Short Term Vehicle Parking

*A new addition to Hervey Bay's
Fishermans Wharf Marina*

**Murphy
Shiplifts**
Fishermans Wharf Marina Hervey Bay

**Fishermans Wharf**
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Haul Out enquiries 07 4128 9744

Marina enquiries 07 4128 9119

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