

Queensland Seafood

Industry Association

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MEDIA RELEASE

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FISHERS WELCOME FEDERAL REVIEW OF INSHORE FISHING PLAN

THE seafood industry has welcomed the Federal Government's review of Queensland's inshore fishing plans - and called on environmental lobbyists to accept the outcome.

"We are confident the Federal Government's review team will find the proposed management plan for Queensland inshore fishing, basically inshore net fishing, is a good plan, a sustainable plan," industry spokesman Mr Robin Hansen said today.

"This is the style of fishing that has been going on in Queensland since the earliest days of European settlement and the State Government's proposed new management arrangements are even more conservative than the ones they are replacing. We are completely confident about the science behind the new plan."

Mr Hansen, Senior Vice-President of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA), said environmental lobbyists should accept the findings of the review panel when they were delivered, probably by the end of October, and move on.

"I want to appeal to the humanity of people employed by environmental lobby businesses like WWF to allow fishing families to get on with their lives without constant vilification in the media.

"At present, these groups are trying to create a sense of panic, hysteria, gloom and doom about sharks, largely on the basis of what they say is happening to

shark populations overseas. This is also a focus of fund-raising efforts for their organisations.

"In Queensland, small sharks are caught for food. It is a food industry, not a fin industry. We do not catch sharks for the value of their fins, which is very much secondary, but for the value of their meat, which is popular with seafood consumers. Sharks are fish, they are good eating and they are plentiful. There is nothing wrong with catching sharks, provided it is properly managed, which it is in Queensland.

"If environmental lobbying businesses need constant public attention to support their fund raising efforts, don't pick on hard-working fishing families in sustainable operations."

Mr Hansen challenged environmental lobbyists to take their protests to countries where sharks were being caught unsustainably.

"If these groups are worried about the quantity or size of sharks being caught by other countries, or the way they are being caught, then go there and protest where it will do some good.

"Don't say there's a problem somewhere overseas and then try to shut down fishing in Australia. That doesn't make sense. Go to where the problem is."

Mr Hansen also rejected calls for total fishing bans in areas like the Coral Sea, saying that was "unsophisticated".

"Total fishing bans might be needed in countries where civil disobedience or lack of central government control means fisheries management rules are ignored. That is not the case in Australia.

"We have some of the most sophisticated fisheries management rules and regulations in the world, and our marine park management should be equally sophisticated.

"It is not sophisticated or clever simply to close entire areas to fishing, and that is something unlikely to be emulated in many of the countries round the world where marine environments need better protection.

"Australia and Queensland in particular, can genuinely lead the world in developing truly sophisticated regimes for management of marine parks, where

they remain multi-use marine parks catering for fishing and other reasonable uses but at the same time protecting the environment.

“We wouldn't turn all of Australia's grazing and cropping lands into national parks, and, in the same way, we would not want to turn all of Australia's coastal waters into marine parks. The real skill is in finding the right balance of sustainable use. That's a skill we should be developing and exporting to the world.”

Mr Hansen said the QSIA would welcome the opportunity to make a presentation to the Federal Government review panel if that would assist in its deliberations.

He said the Association also was prepared to work with environmental lobby organisations but found them difficult to deal with in good faith.

“Obviously, environmental lobbying is a competitive business, with so many competing for public attention and public support, and we find many of their claims in the media just outrageous. Also, they seem to produce a never-ending series of rolling ambit claims, trying to push people into smaller and smaller areas or off the water entirely.

“We sit round the table with many of these groups in various conservation forums but, again, I would like to appeal publicly to their sense of humanity and common sense, and ask them to leave hard-working Queensland fishing families alone now and take their protests to where the problems are, overseas.”

FURTHER INFORMATION call Mr Robin Hansen on 0428 794 992

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