
MEDIA RELEASE

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Queensland Seafood Industry Association welcomes release of inshore fishing plan by Primary Industries & Fisheries Minister Tim Mulherin

THE Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) has welcomed the release of a new management plan for fishing in inshore east coast Queensland waters by Primary Industries & Fisheries Minister Tim Mulherin.

QSIA President Neil Green said he believed the plan marked a “watershed” in joint government-industry development of management arrangements for commercial fisheries.

Mr Mulherin had released the first stage of the new management plan today.

“I don’t recall a time previously when seafood industry representatives have felt the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries and a Fisheries Minister took such an inclusive approach to development of a management plan,” Mr Green said.

“The process followed by the Minister and his Department made industry representatives genuinely feel we were part of a team developing this management plan. This is an excellent omen for the future.”

Mr Green said the East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery Management Plan controlled the catch of many inshore species like barramundi, whiting, shark, mackerel, mullet, threadfin and grunter.

“The fishery is worth tens of millions of dollars a year to the Queensland economy, supplies directly and indirectly hundreds of jobs, especially in regional coastal areas, and provides fresh fish to retail outlets and restaurants for the enjoyment of both local residents and tourists”.

“This is a very important fishing sector and its proper management is vital for fresh fish for consumers and jobs for local residents all the way from Coolangatta to Cape York. It’s vital that the Queensland Government and the Queensland seafood industry get the management of this fishery right.”

Mr Green said sustainability was the foundation of all commercial fisheries in Queensland and sustainability guarantees had been strengthened by rules in the new management plan.

For example, tougher attendance rules for fishermen operating nets in offshore waters meant fishermen not only would continue to be restricted in exactly where a net could be set but also would have to remain close by the net, so it could be checked and cleared regularly.

This further strengthened the industry's environmental credentials and responsible fishing practices, and would be welcomed by all fishermen.

Tighter recreational bag limits for some species would also help guarantee the sustainability of fish resources, given the acknowledgement that, for many species of fish, the total catch taken by anglers was far higher than the catch taken by commercial fishermen on behalf of seafood consumers.

However, along with resource sustainability, the plan also aims to increase seafood industry profitability.

"The Queensland Government, and Minister Mulherin and his Department in particular, are recognising industry profitability is also vitally important. Sustainability has been the big issue in the last decade but fisheries managers are now giving consideration to issues of seafood industry sustainability and profitability.

"There are a number of developments in the new management plan that should add extra profitability to the inshore fishery. Given the severe impacts of rising costs plus cutbacks in fishing grounds over recent years, fishermen need the opportunity to increase their profits."

Mr Green added that he wanted to personally thank the staff members in the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries who had worked on the new inshore plan.

"The Departmental staff need to be acknowledged for their efforts, because this has been a lengthy, complex project involving widespread consultation, tight deadlines and plenty of late nights so stage one of the plan could finally be rolled out."

Mr Green said the Queensland seafood industry would be concerned by apparent interference by the Federal Government in aspects of the inshore fishing plan, apparently at the urging of environmental lobbyists.

"The plan has just been released and we are yet to assess the impacts of some extra restrictions the Commonwealth looks to have imposed, but I will be able to speak more fully about that in the next couple of days.

"For now, I don't want that to detract from the welcome aspects of the plan that have been included by Minister Mulherin and his Department.

