

Queensland Seafood Industry Association

www.queenslandseafood.com.au

MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 3 February 2010

SEAFOOD CONSUMERS MAY BE BIG LOSERS IN MARINE PARK PLANS

SEAFOOD consumers have been warned they could be big losers as new marine parks are developed in waters right round the Queensland coast.

“Queensland seafood consumers have a big stake in the process underway right now to create new marine parks right round the coast from the Northern Territory to New South Wales borders,” seafood industry spokesman Michael Gardner said today.

“They will certainly lose access to fresh local seafood because the new marine parks will include new ‘no-fishing’ zones. It is just a question of how much seafood they lose. Seafood consumers -- and that’s 95% of Queenslanders or more than four million people -- are major stakeholders in this process but most consumers I speak to are not aware that it’s happening.

“The past experience of so many Queensland coastal communities with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park rezoning process in 2004 should make everyone very conscious of what can go wrong again this time round.”

Mr Gardner, President of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA), said his organisation had been talking to both the Federal and State Governments about the new marine park plans and wanted to alert the general public to what is happening.

“The QSIA is obviously representing the interests of fishermen and other seafood industry participants in these negotiations but also is the only body that can effectively represent the people with the most to lose: Queensland’s seafood consumers.

“The first step is to alert seafood consumers to the planned new marine parks and invite them to get involved in defending their access to fresh local Queensland

seafood. Otherwise, they will see even more wild seafood disappearing from the shops and wonder what's happened."

Mr Gardner said the Australian Government, through the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage & the Arts (DEWHA), is currently mapping out new marine parks, in what it calls "bio-regions", round the Australian coast. In Queensland, these would affect the Gulf of Carpentaria and the entire east coast; accept the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) Marine Park.

These new marine parks would cover Commonwealth waters -- basically starting three miles off the coast -- but the Queensland Government then would be under pressure to impose "complementary" new marine parks, including matching "no fishing" zones, in State waters right into the high tide mark, the way it already had done with the GBR Marine Park.

"The areas being examined for possible marine parks produce thousands of tonnes of seafood worth hundreds of millions of dollars, most of which is eaten in Queensland by local residents and tourists.

"The income generated by this seafood flows on through regional economies and supports thousands of jobs, so it is an issue that also should be of vital interest to everyone who catches, processes and markets seafood plus everyone involved in industries providing goods and services."

Mr Gardner said he was concerned mistakes made with the rezoning of the GBR Marine Park could be repeated with the new federal marine parks off Queensland.

"The Australian Government was severely criticised for not taking into account the socio-economic impacts of the GBR Marine Park rezoning but we are yet to see any work and industry involvement on the social and economic impacts of the Commonwealth's planned new parks.

"Many individuals and businesses were hurt by that rezoning in communities along most of the Queensland east coast, and no-one wants to see that sort of damage done again.

"Fishermen are not prepared to accept any loss of access but, if this was to happen, would expect adequate compensation for all affected industry participants. QSIA has still not seen a displaced effort policy from the Federal Government.

"Most importantly of all for seafood consumers, how large will the parks be and how large will the new 'no fishing' zones be, and how much seafood will be locked away?

"There is an enormous amount of detail that is still to be revealed, and important negotiations still to be conducted with the Australian and Queensland

Governments, and seafood consumers certainly should be keeping a very close eye on what's happening and getting involved wherever possible.”

Mr Gardner said seafood consumers wanting to know more about the current marine park planning should contact the QSIA, either by telephoning (07) 3262 6855 or going to its website at www.queenslandseafood.com.au

FURTHER INFORMATION:

Michael Gardner
President, QSIA
Tel 0409 991 150

Winston Harris
CEO, QSIA
Tel 0418 448 616

Note: The State Government Office of Economic & Statistical Research estimates the current Queensland (resident) population is more than 4.475 million.