

Queensland Seafood

Industry Association

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MEDIA RELEASE

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As Navy minesweeper deploys off Cape Moreton

SEAFOOD INDUSTRY WELCOMES SEARCH FOR LOST CONTAINERS

THE Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) has welcomed deployment of the RAN minesweeper HMAS *Yarra* to search for lost shipping containers off Cape Moreton.

“Recruitment of the Navy into the search for the containers was something we suggested early on and so we’re naturally very pleased to see the *Yarra* arriving off Moreton Island to help,” Mr Green said today.

“It’s vitally important that these containers be located, first of all, so trawlers can work without the risk of snagging their nets on them and potentially capsizing. This is always a risk when trawlers hook up on unknown snags and there have been a number of lives lost in this way off Queensland in recent years.

“It is a very real danger. It means that trawling in the affected area off Cape Moreton, a very productive prawning ground, is impossible until the containers are located.

“When the containers are found, they will still represent 31 new snags on the fishing grounds, even though their location will be known, and ideally we want to see them recovered from the seafloor. However, having the *Yarra* pinpoint their positions is a good first step.”

Mr Green praised the actions of Maritime Safety Queensland, MSQ, in dealing with the loss of shipping containers and fuel oil from the cargo vessel *Pacific Adventurer* on Wednesday last week.

“I believe this is a problem MSQ has inherited but, from what I’ve seen, they have handled it as well as their resources allow under the circumstances,” he said.

“The Environmental Protection Authority originally said these containers had been lost in 200-metres-plus of water in Commonwealth waters well wide of Cape Moreton and would not be a problem for trawlers. However, fishermen knew better and MSQ has since confirmed the containers are more likely to be in 150 metres of water, which is a normal trawling depth for our boats.

“MSQ has carried out preliminary modelling of where the containers might be, which will provide a starting point for the *Yarra*, and they have kept industry informed of progress through a joint government industry task force that has been formed.

“We appreciate what MSQ and Transport Minister John Mickel have done so far and also wish the *Yarra* good hunting in its search for these containers, which, to trawler operators, are potentially as dangerous as mines. They can certainly sink trawlers.

“One other thing: when the *Yarra* does find all those shipping containers, I can promise the crew a good feed of Queensland prawns, the best in the world.”

FURTHER INFORMATION: Mr Neil Green, Tel 0408 18 22 52 or 4783 3669.