

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 966
Asked on Tuesday, 6 June 2006

MR FENLON asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

QUESTION:

How do the activities of his department's Boating and Fisheries Patrol protect and conserve mud crab stocks?

ANSWER:

The mud crab is an important icon species to all Queenslanders. Some would argue that the State's tourism and hospitality trade is more reliant on this delicacy than any other. Accordingly, we need to ensure mud crabs are harvested in an ecologically sustainable way. Mud crabs are targeted by commercial and recreational fishers. The commercial and recreational harvest is managed by a variety of controls including:

- a minimum legal size of 15cm;
- a prohibition on taking female crabs; and
- apparatus restrictions.

Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) officers, located throughout the state, conduct the following activities in order to ensure compliance in the Mud Crab Fishery:

- at-sea and land based patrols and surveillance;
- catch and apparatus inspections;
- logbook inspections to ensure accuracy of record keeping;
- inspections of processing premises;
- seizure of unmarked and incorrectly marked crab pots.

QBFP officers are supported by an intelligence analyst and five investigators who have specialised investigative skills that they use to gather evidence relating to the black marketing of mud crabs and allegations of laundering of mud crabs in other jurisdictions.

A low tolerance approach to breaches is adopted in the mud crab fishery with offenders being issued Fisheries Infringement Notices (FINs) or facing prosecution for more serious breaches.

Additionally, commercial fishers are involved in the management of the fishery and have a good understanding of the management arrangements and why they are necessary. This contributes to a high rate of voluntary compliance.