

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 179
Asked on Wednesday, 21 February 2007

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

QUESTION:

What is the Department of Fisheries doing to ensure the sustainability of our coastal fish stock?

ANSWER:

The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries is committed to the principles and objectives of Ecologically Sustainable Development and manages Queensland's fisheries resources with the aim of ensuring fish stocks and the habitat supporting them are used sustainably while also providing social and economic benefits to the community.

A series of fisheries management plans have been developed over the last six years which outline provisions to ensure that fisheries resources are used in an ecologically sustainable manner. Regulations on commercial and recreational fishing such as take and possession and size limits, closed seasons and closed waters all contribute to the ongoing protection of our fish species and their habitats. Plans have been developed for the East Coast Trawl, Gulf of Carpentaria Inshore Fin Fish, Freshwater, Coral Reef Fin Fish and Spanner Crab Fisheries.

Management plans were developed in close consultation with relevant Fisheries Management Advisory Committees (MACs). MACs are stakeholder based committees with representation from key groups including commercial, recreational and environmental and conservation interests. Membership of the MACs aims to ensure that ecological, social and economic aspects are balanced in the development of management arrangements for Queensland's fisheries.

The latest initiative of the department is the commencement of a process to develop a management plan for inshore fin fish on the east coast of Queensland. A round of community consultation has already been undertaken and the development of management arrangements will begin shortly in consultation with the InshoreMAC. The development of this plan aims to provide for the continued community benefit gained from the use of fisheries resources while safeguarding the preservation of the fish species.

Further to the management planning process, under the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the Queensland Government is required to demonstrate that their commercial fisheries are being managed sustainably to maintain export approvals. All of Queensland's 24 commercial fisheries have now been accredited as being managed using sustainable practices. Annual fisheries status reports for each of these fisheries are prepared to demonstrate that each continues to meet national sustainability guidelines.

A Long Term Monitoring Program has also been established since 1999 to collect vital fishery-independent information about the sustainability of Queensland's fish stocks and habitats. Surveys are undertaken regularly to monitor trends in species abundance. This data is used together with information coming from commercial fishers logbooks to undertake periodic stock assessments.

The implementation of management plans and ongoing monitoring of all our fisheries demonstrate the effectiveness of fisheries management strategies in protecting and conserving the State's fisheries resources.