

Question on Notice

No. 549

Asked on Tuesday 17 April 2007

MR BOMBOLAS asked the Minister for Transport and Main Roads (MR LUCAS)—

QUESTION:

What initiatives have the Government adopted to find ways to improve some of the poor safety practices in the State's commercial fishing industry?

ANSWER:

Fatality rates within the commercial fishing industry are higher in comparison to the all industries average and this defines the sector as high risk. Maritime Safety Queensland is implementing a range of strategies to increase safety in the fishing sector and to encourage desired behavioural change at an operational level.

Key drivers behind Maritime Safety Queensland's strategy have been:

- Coronial recommendations to introduce safety measures such as wearing of personal flotation devices (PFDs) at sea and the carrying of a personal Emergency Positioning Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB);
- The introduction of the National Standard for Commercial Vessels which will remove existing grandfathering provisions that exempt pre 1996 fishing vessels from current safety requirements;
- Maritime Safety Queensland's identification of fishing ships in its top 10 risks requiring priority intervention in its 2007/08 action plans.

Key initiatives to date are:

- Implementation of safety equipment trials in south east Queensland and the north Queensland/Torres Strait fisheries. Maritime Safety Queensland worked with manufacturers to supply commercial fishers with the latest range of inflatable PFDs and personal EPIRBs to assess and provide feedback on the performance of this safety equipment and its suitability in the working environment.
- The development of the fishing sector - specific safety management and operating documents to assist commercial fishers to discharge their safety obligations.
- Extensive industry consultation with the Queensland Seafood Industry Association, the Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association and the Independent Trawl Association to promote the safe interaction of vessels in the entrances to the Port of Brisbane. This project has identified ways to enhance the safe interaction of vessels that will be applied on a whole of State basis.
- Face to face consultation with commercial fishers across the State regarding the introduction of the National Standard for Commercial Vessels and its impact on fishing operations.
- Maritime Safety Queensland's lead role in initiating a review of government policy that impacts commercial fishing ship safety. The primary objective is to ensure a whole of government approach is achieved.
- A proposed trial of the Automatic Identification System for ships on a range of vessels including commercial fishing ships to evaluate its effectiveness in averting collisions with large trading ships.