

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 953
Asked on Friday, 8 June 2007

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

QUESTION:

Will he advise what role Marine Animal Release Teams will play in preparations for this year's whale migration?

ANSWER:

The Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol (QBFP) has undertaken the release of Humpback whales entangled in Shark Control equipment for a number of years. The QBFP has always taken a proactive leadership role in the release of Humpback whales in conjunction with other agencies most notably Seaworld on the Gold Coast.

The QBFP has adopted world's best practice in relation to cetacean release and has developed a range of specialised cutting equipment to facilitate the process.

The QBFP has a total of 25 officers who have all received extensive training in marine animal release techniques.

There are eight Marine Animal Release Team members located on the Gold Coast, four members each in Mooloolaba, Noosa and Airlie Beach, three members in Mackay and one member in both Brisbane and Bowen.

In terms of available equipment, there are two purpose built vessels located on the Gold Coast, and one of each in Noosa, Mooloolaba and Mackay. A range of specialised cutting and release equipment is also available at these locations.

A team usually comprises four members.

Team members undertake regular training in local areas. Specialised training sessions were recently held in Mackay and at Rainbow Beach.

The QBFP also has a number of volunteer whale watchers in place on the Gold Coast. These trained volunteers provide early advice about whale movements and entanglements.

The QBFP's Marine Animal Release Teams are already monitoring whale movements along the coast and are ready to respond to reports of entanglement.

Since 1992 there have been 33 recorded whale entanglements, with 29 whales released successfully thanks mainly to the efforts and dedication of the Marine Animal Release Team members and volunteer whale watchers.

Seaworld staff also provide valuable assistance to the QBFP's Marine Animal Release Teams during entanglements.