

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 1202
Asked on 15 September 2009

MR WENDT asked the Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland (MR MULHERIN)–

QUESTION:

What support is Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries providing to assist trawl fishermen transition to alternative, more effective by-catch reduction devices?

ANSWER:

Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries (QPIF) has established a \$1 million rebate scheme which is now available to help trawl fishermen start using more effective bycatch reduction devices on their nets. The funds are part of the Queensland Government's election commitment to 'take bycatch off our beaches' by reducing the catch of non-target marine species.

The rebate scheme allows trawl operators to claim against the purchase of new netting, which includes square mesh codends and upgraded turtle exclusion devices (TEDs). Recent research into the saucer scallop sector of the trawl fishery has demonstrated that the combined use of square mesh codends and TEDs can result in a reduction of up to 77 percent in bycatch without significant loss in marketable product.

The rebate amount will generally not cover the full price of the fishing gear but rather enables sharing of the cost with industry. A maximum of \$2,250 can be claimed against the purchase of multiple square mesh codends and \$2,000 against the purchase of multiple TEDs over the rebate period.

QPIF has been working closely with the trawl industry in recent times to address a number of issues that are negatively impacting on the industry. The effective use of these bycatch reduction devices not only will ensure the trawl fishery has minimal ecological impact, but will also make fishing operations more efficient and therefore help protect jobs.

Benefits include improved industry-wide profitability, access to new markets, reduced operating costs, improved product quality and a reduced ecological footprint which will all contribute to the long-term viability of the industry.

The rebate scheme commenced on 1 July 2009 and rebates are available to eligible trawl licence holders who upgrade their TEDs to meet new specifications outlined in the rebate scheme guidelines and/or who purchase square mesh codends for use in the scallop sector of the fishery.

I am advised by QPIF there is quite some interest in the rebate scheme with reports from trawl net makers that they have many orders to make the new and improved gear that is eligible under the rebate. I would encourage all East Coast Trawl operators to take advantage of the rebate and the chance to adopt the improved TED and BRD designs.

The rebate details are:

- Scallop square mesh codend - \$450 for each square mesh codend from 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010, then this amount reduces to \$225 for each scallop square mesh codend from 1 July 2010 to 31 December 2010 (to a maximum of \$2,250).
- TEDs - \$250 for each TED from 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010 (to a maximum of \$2,000).

In conjunction with the rebate scheme, QPIF is developing a research plan for testing new and improved bycatch reduction devices and an extension strategy to ensure industry is fully aware of advancements in gear technology and to increase the uptake of these effective bycatch reduction devices by industry.