



MEDIA RELEASE

Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast Survey sheds light on fish availability

Findings from a recently completed survey of the availability of fresh fish through 44 different outlets across Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast have raised serious questions about claims that people across Queensland would lose access to fresh fish if proposed Net Free Areas went ahead.

Nathan Johnston, a spokesperson for Nets Out Queensland Campaign said “We knew that the claims of fish disappearing from the shelf were dubious, but even we were a bit surprised at the results”

“Of the 18 supermarkets, clubs, pubs and taverns surveyed, no fresh fish product was offered for sale that was identified as being sourced from the proposed new Net Free Area”.

“Of the 14 fish and chip stores surveyed, there was only one instance of fish being for sale identified as being sourced from the proposed Net Free Area.”

“Of the 10 restaurants surveyed, only 2 had fresh fish product offered for sale potentially being sourced from the proposed Net Free Area.” Mr Johnston said.

“If a customer wanted to source fresh fish from the local areas it appears the retail specialist seafood outlets are the place to go, with the two establishments surveyed both offering fish sourced from the proposed Net Free Area at the time of survey, but they also offered a range of fish species for sale sourced from areas outside the proposed new Net Free Areas.”

Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast are directly adjacent to the largest of the 3 proposed Net Free Areas. It is also the area that produces 250 of 319 tonne of the fish netted from the three areas combined.

“With Rockhampton and Capricorn coast being directly adjacent to the most productive of the three net free areas, we were expecting to see a lot more local product being offered for sale than was actually the case”. “The reality was that only one in nine instances of fish being offered for sale potentially came from the proposed net free area”

“One can expect that this low prevalence of fresh local fish would slip back even further as you move away from adjacent areas.’ Mr Johnston said.

Only 319 of over 10,500 tonne of Queensland’s total fish catch and production is currently sourced using gill nets in the three proposed net free areas. At the national level, these areas only account for 0.2% of Australia’s 163,811 tonnes total annual fish catch and production.

The survey data also revealed that a significant segment of the market is seeking out high quality Australian farmed products like Atlantic salmon, which was available from 25% of all outlets surveyed. For the last

decade Australians have been enjoying fresh farmed fish like barramundi and Atlantic salmon produced in aquaculture facilities across Australia. This has led to major and continuing expansion in the industry to help meet demand.

“Our survey has found that closing three small sections to commercial netting will not result in the disappearance of fish from our shops. Queensland’s coastline extends almost 7,000 kilometres, most of which would remain open to commercial gill netting operations.” Mr Johnston said

“We are deeply concerned about a recent disallowance motion tabled by LNP”

“This motion aims to block regulations that would have led to the introduction of these net free areas”

“A petition developed to bring about this disallowance motion was based on the availability of fresh fish and we are concerned the people of Queensland are forming their opinions on misleading information.”

Nets Out Queensland campaign believe this may only be the tip of the iceberg, when it comes to recent claims and encourages members of the community, the media and politicians to carefully scrutinise the survey and other information on the matter and judge for themselves where the truth lies.

The full report is available at www.netsoutqld.org

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Reality	Rhetoric
<p>Only 3% of fish produced in Queensland and only 0.2% of Aussie caught and produced fish comes from the Net Free Areas. A recent survey of fish offered for sale in the CQ area found that a majority of the fish offered was not caught in these net free areas.</p>	<p>Local Seafood will disappear and we will have to eat fish from Asian Sewers</p>
<p>The proposed zones will exclude the use of commercial gill nets only. They will not exclude commercial trawling, crabbing and line fishing.</p> <p>For non-commercial fishers no changes are proposed to restrict their use of nets. For example, recreational fishers and traditional fishers can continue to use permitted nets to fish within the zones.</p>	<p>Cast nets and crab pots for will be banned and commercial fishers will be locked out of the areas</p>
<p>The proposed buyback scheme aims to reduce displaced effort, which is the movement of licences that were used for netting in the zones into other areas where they would be in competition with other net fishers</p> <p>The buyback scheme aims to purchase at least 45 of the licences historically operating in the area.</p>	<p>Commercial fishers are going to be displaced and come and net my creeks and rivers more.</p> <p>This is bad for local anglers and commercial netters alike.</p>
<p>The buy-back scheme is completely voluntary.</p> <p>Although the proposed buyback scheme is generous compared to past licence buybacks, no-one is being forced to take up the offer</p>	<p>Commercial Fishers are being forced out of the industry and will lose their jobs</p>
<p>The buy-back scheme is completely voluntary.</p> <p>Although the proposed buyback scheme is generous compared to past licence buybacks, no-one is being forced to take up the offer.</p> <p>The buyback scheme aims to purchase at least 45 of the 52 odd licences historically operating in the area, so the target set by the government highlights that not all licences are likely to be bought back.</p>	<p>The compensation being offered isn't generous enough.</p>
<p>While in the past the fishery has assessed as being sustainable, this is based on the outdated Maximum Sustainable Yield assessment formula. The recent MRAG review of fisheries in Queensland have supported introduction of Maximum Economic Yield, in order to reduce levels of risk and maintain the resilience Queensland's aquatic environment. Read the full review and detail on MEY in Annex 6 for more detail.</p> <p>The Australian Marine Conservation Society goes one step further in their assessment of wildcaught barramundi in their Sustainable Seafood Guide, by encouraging people not to select this product. When it comes to threadfin salmon, they encourage consumers not to select the product sourced from Queensland and to eat less from product sourced in NT and WA.</p>	<p>The fishery is sustainable</p>
<p>Most fish caught in NFAs are sent to southern markets. Mackerel is one of the most popular locally caught fish at local fish n chip stores. Only 4t/yr mackerel were netted in the NFAs in the last 3 years This means 574t/yr of mackerel is still available for fish n chips.</p> <p>A recent survey in the Central Queensland Area identified that the most common species of fish from Queensland waters that are available through local outlets, in particular, fish and chip shops, are Spanish mackerel (12 of the 14 shops surveyed) and several species of reef fish (6 of the 14 shops surveyed) - all of which are commercially line caught only and will remain unaffected by existing or proposed netting closures.</p>	<p>Local fish won't be available at fish n chip stores.</p>