

Outcomes of the Fisheries 2015 QRAA Assistance Schemes (associated with the introduction of net-free zones)

Fisheries Queensland

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Summary

As part of the Queensland Government's Sustainable Fishing Policy (the Policy); three net-free zones (the Zones) were established at Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton on 1 November 2015. The Government set aside \$10M to help affected fishers. Three QRAA assistance schemes were established, all of which closed on 2 December 2015. This report provides a summary of the outcome of each scheme.

The first scheme, the Buyback Scheme, was targeted at the holders of the commercial fishing boat licences used in the zones between 2012 and 2014. The scheme sought to buy back up to 46 licences voluntarily in order to minimise commercial fishing effort moving into other areas or other fisheries (displaced effort). Twenty-seven (27) offers were received at a cost of \$3.318M.

Given the outcomes of the Buyback Scheme the Government will consider whether further measures are required to manage displaced effort.

The remaining two schemes, the Settlement Scheme and the Impact Alleviation Scheme, were targeted at impacted commercial fishers who were offered a cash payment based on the level of commercial netting undertaken in each of the Zones. There were 95 fishers eligible for the Settlement Scheme and 87 fishers chose to accept the offer at total cost of \$1.026M. There were 30 fishers eligible for the Impact Alleviation Scheme. All eligible fishers chose to accept the offer made at a total cost of \$1.5M.

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1 Details of the assistance schemes

1.1 Introduction

The regulation for each of the assistance schemes detailed below can be found in the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Regulation 2011* at Schedules 26 (Buyback Scheme), 27 (settlement Scheme) and 28 (Impact Alleviation Scheme).

1.2 Buyback Scheme

The voluntary Licence Buyback scheme was available to holders of a commercial fishing vessel licence that had recorded net fishing effort in one or more of the Zones in the period between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2014.

To reduce the possibility of displaced fishing effort, the voluntary buyback scheme aimed to remove 46 commercial fishing vessel licences of the total of 78 commercial fishing vessel licences that were eligible for the scheme.

Licence holders were offered a fixed price for the entire licence package. The value of the offer varied from licence to licence depending on the fishery symbols attached to the licence. Amounts paid for each symbol can be found in the *Rural and Regional Adjustment Regulation 2011*.

1.3 Settlement Scheme

The Settlement Scheme was available to commercial fishers who had been in control of a licensed commercial fishing boat that undertook commercial net fishing within one or more the Zones.

In order to be eligible for the settlement scheme evidence had to be provided, in the form of commercial logbooks, that demonstrated that the fisher was in charge of a commercial vessel operating in the Zones between 1 January 2012 and 31 December 2014. This evidence needed to be received by the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries before 1 April 2015.

Fishers were offered a set amount based on a formula which used the number of days they had fished in the Zones between 2012 and 2014 and a daily rate.

1.4 Impact Alleviation Scheme

The Impact Alleviation Scheme was available to commercial fishers most impacted as a result of the introduction of the Zones with each eligible fisher sharing a pool of \$1.5M that was set aside from the budget of \$10M.

Fishers who had recorded at least 60 days net fishing effort in the Zones (as recorded in logbooks received before 1 April 2015) and where that effort was at least 50% of their total net fishing effort were eligible for payments under this scheme.

2 Results of the assistance schemes

2.1 Licence Buyback Scheme

There were 27 commercial fishing vessel licences offered for sale to QRAA all of which were accepted at a total cost of \$3,318,000. Of the 27 licences, one had operated in the Cairns Zone, four in the Mackay Zone and 22 in the Fitzroy Zone.

Table 1 below provides details of the 103 fishery symbols associated with the 27 licences purchased.

Netting Symbols	Number purchased
N1 – General Large Mesh East Coast	5
N2 – Barramundi East Coast	15
N3 – Barramundi Gulf of Carpentaria	1
N11 – Small mesh (bait) Nets East Coast	13
Other Fishery Symbols	Number Purchased
L1 – South East Queensland Line	1
L2 – Great Barrier Reef Line	3
L3 – Great Barrier Reef Line	21
C1 – Mud and Sand Crab	4
C2 – Spanner Crab South	3
C3 – Spanner Crab North	5
S – Shark	13
RQ – Reef Species	6
SM – Spanish Mackerel	6
T1 – East Coast Otter Trawl	2
T8 – Northern Beam Trawl East Coast	5

Table 1: Symbols purchased by voluntary buyback scheme

Table 2 below provides details of the catch and effort of the 27 licences.

	Cairns Licences	Mackay Licences	Fitzroy Licences	Total
Catch within Zone (tonnes)	3.8	34.3	439.4	477.5
Catch outside Zone (tonnes)	2.7	124.5	218.7	345.9
Effort within Zone (days)	50	308	4,470	4,828
Effort outside Zone (days)	38	660	2,318	3,016

Table 2: Catch and effort (2012 to 2014) of the 27 licences (all fishing methods)

2.2 Settlement Scheme

There were 95 commercial fisher licence holders eligible for payments under this Scheme. A total of 87 applications were received at a total cost of \$1,026,500.

2.3 Impact Alleviation Scheme

There were 30 commercial fisher licence holders eligible for payments under this Scheme. All eligible fishers applied and received a total of \$1,500,018.