



# Fisheries Queensland

## East Coast Net Buy-back Program

**This publication has been compiled by Maggie Brown and Tony Ham of Fisheries Queensland, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries**

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## Executive Summary

Between 2012 and 2014, the Queensland Government ran three buyback schemes with a total budget of \$9 million. The buyback targeted commercial large mesh netting licences from the Queensland East Coast.

The buyback yielded 74 commercial fishing vessel licence packages which included:

- 135 netting symbols (116 large mesh netting symbols and 19 small mesh netting symbols); and
- 194 ancillary fishery symbols, which could be used to access other commercial fisheries such as crab, line and trawl.

The buyback represented a 31.9% reduction in large mesh netting authorities on the East Coast. While total fishing effort varies from year to year based on external influences such as weather, seasonal variations in fish abundance and market forces, the total net fishing effort fell by 8% over the period of the buyback (from approximately 23,200 fishing days in 2012 to 18,770 in 2014).

## Introduction

In 2012, the Newman Government committed \$9 million to buy back commercial fishing licences along the eastern seaboard of Queensland (see Appendix 1). The aim of the buyback was to:

- reduce the commercial fishing pressure on resources,
- reduce the impact of inshore netting on protected species; and
- improve economic conditions for commercial fishers.

A stakeholder working group was informed to advise the then Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on the implementation of the buyback process.

QRAA undertook administration of the buyback process.

## Buyback Schemes

Three schemes were implemented as part of the net buyback process over three years. These are outlined as follows:

- **Scheme 1** involved eligible licence holders who held either an N1 or N2 netting authority being invited to voluntarily submit their entire licence packages for sale. This Scheme was undertaken over two rounds, with round one commencing in November 2012 and concluding in January 2013. Round two was undertaken in March 2013.
- **Scheme 2** offered fixed priced offers for selected symbols, targeting those symbols authorising the use of large mesh nets (N1, N2, N4, N10 and K1 – K8). Additionally fishers were offered the opportunity to put forward a primary vessel licence for sale for an additional payment. Scheme 2 consisted of a single round and was undertaken in October 2013.
- **Scheme 3** was divided into 3 parts. Part A involved a fixed price offer for N1 and N2 symbols. Part B offered to purchase full licence packages up to a designated capped price. Part C. involved a fixed price offer for N4, N10 and K1- K8 symbols. Part A commenced in September 2014 and concluded in October 2014 and Part B commenced in October 2014 and concluded in November 2014. Part C was not commenced as the funds set aside for the buyback had effectively been fully expended at the conclusion of Part B.

## Results

The following section presents an overview of the results of the East Coast Net Buy-back Scheme.

### Licence packages and symbols

As a result of the East Coast Net Buy-back program Fisheries Queensland purchased a total of:

- 74 Commercial fishing vessel licence packages
- 135 Net-specific symbols
- 194 other non-net symbols

### Symbols purchased

A total of 63 N1 symbols and 39 N2 symbols were purchased during the East Coast Net Buy-back program (Table 1). Table 1 details the number of each symbol type purchased per scheme.

Table 1 Symbols purchased during net buy-back per program

Scheme	N1	N2	N3	N4	N10	N11	K's	Other symbols
1	23	10	0	0	0	5	0	71
2	14	8	0	0	8	1	4	1
3.1	3	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
3.2	23	17	1	1	0	13	0	122 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Total</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>194</b>

**Total symbols purchased: 329**

Of the fishing authorities purchased in the three buyback schemes, operators reported catch taken within the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Area between 2010 and 2014, totaling 894.45 tonnes of fish.

<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the *Fisheries Regulation 2008* multiple C3 symbols may be written on a licence. As a result two C3 symbols have been purchased within a single licence package in Scheme 3.2.

## Eligible authorities

In order to illustrate any variations between numbers of authorities before and after the East Coast Net Buy-back Program, the number of eligible authorities as of 2011 and 2012 is provided below in Table 2<sup>2</sup>. In addition, Table 2 outlines the number of eligible authorities purchased during the net buy-back.

Table 2: Numbers of eligible authorities as of July 2011 and July 2012 and the number of these authorities purchased during the East Coast Net Buy-back.

Authority	Total number eligible 2011	Total number eligible 2012	Total purchased	Percentage (%) of 2012 eligible authorities
Commercial Fishing Boat Licence	1522	1520	74 licence packages	4.9
N1	163	162	63	38.9
N2	159	159	39	24.5
N3	87	87	1	1.1
N4	6	6	1	16.7
N10	29	30	8	26.7
N11	323	323	18	5.6
K1	2	2	0	0.0
K2	3	3	0	0.0
K3	4	4	0	0.0
K4	1	1	0	0.0
K5	7	7	0	0.0
K6	3	3	0	0.0
K7	5	5	1	20.0
K8	15	15	3	20.0

## Catch attributed to surrendered net symbols

The following section provides a snapshot of the catch taken under those authorities surrendered in the East Coast Net Buy-back for the period 2010-2014. As part of the buy-back scheme other non-net symbols were also purchased. Appendix 2 provides an overview of the historical non-net catch of participating authority holders from 2010-2011.

Fisheries Queensland utilises a standardised classification system for dividing Queensland fishing regions into manageable geographical localities. The review of the East Coast Net Buy-back Program uses this classification known as *Mapstone Regions* to assess who has taken part in the buy-back program and where their historical fishing effort was distributed. Appendix 3 provides a map of the Mapstone Regions used by Fisheries Queensland.

Due to the complexity and volume of the net fishery in the Sub tropical Mapstone region, they have been further divided into two parts, Hervey Bay and the South East region below.

<sup>2</sup> Fisheries Queensland uses financial year timeframes as snapshot dates to assess information relevant to the industry.



## Cairns

Historical Cairns region catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 3 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2014 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 9.4% of the total Cairns region net catch (t).

Table 3: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered net authorities
2010	49.4	28.3
2011	52.1	21.1
2012	46.7	19.8
2013	22.8	13.5
2014	12.3	9.4

Total 2010- 2014 Cairns region catch (t) of net authorities that took part in net buy-back program: 183.3

## Capricorn Bunker

Historical Capricorn Bunker catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 4 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2014 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 16.0% of the total Capricorn Bunker region net catch (t).

Table 4: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered net authorities
2010	52.9	12.4
2011	50.4	7.3
2012	39.6	9.4
2013	46.5	9.9
2014	46.5	16.0

Total 2010- 2014 Capricorn Bunker region catch (t) of net authorities that took part in net buy-back program: 235.9

## Far Northern

Historical Far Northern catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 5 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2013 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 7.1% of the total Far Northern region net catch (t).

Table 5: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered net authorities
2010	8.9	52.7
2011	9.6	62.3
2012	0	0
2013	0.1	7.1
2014	0	0

Total 2010- 2014 Far Northern region catch (t) of net authorities that took part in net buy-back program: 18.6

## Gulf of Carpentaria

Historical Gulf of Carpentaria catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 6 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2014 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 2.7% of the total Gulf of Carpentaria region net catch (t).

Table 6: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered authorities
2010	24.8	0.9
2011	0	0
2012	0	0
2013	6.7	0.4
2014	40.8	2.7

Total 2010- 2014 Gulf of Carpentaria region catch (t) of net authorities that took part in net buy-back program: 72.8

## Hervey Bay

Historical Hervey Bay catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 7 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2014 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 3.2% of the total Hervey Bay region net catch (t).

Table 7: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered authorities
2010	165.4	16.2
2011	114.8	12.2
2012	148.8	13.5
2013	139.6	13.3
2014	26.8	3.2
Total 2010- 2014 Hervey Bay region catch (t) of net authorities that part in net buy-back program: 595.4		

## Mackay

Historical Mackay catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 8 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2014 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 19.3% of the total Mackay region net catch (t).

Table 8: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered authorities
2010	29.0	16.0
2011	31.4	15.3
2012	60.2	13.7
2013	30.31	13.3
2014	46.4	19.3
Total 2010- 2014 Mackay region catch (t) of net authorities that part in net buy-back program: 197.31		

## South East

Historical South East catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 9 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2014 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 6.8% of the total South East region net catch (t).

Table 9: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered authorities
2010	190.9	9.4
2011	209.0	11.9
2012	207.2	12.1
2013	187.49	8.96
2014	97.1	6.8
Total 2010- 2014 South East region catch (t) of net authorities that part in net buy-back program: 891.69		

## The Swains

Historical Swains catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 10 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent. The net authorities who surrendered symbols and/ or licence packages as part of the net buy-back program did not record catch (t) from 2011-2014.

The total 2010 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 100% of the total Swains region net catch (t).

Table 10: Catch from 2010-2014 of net authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered authorities
2010	<1	100.0
2011	0	0
2012	0	0
2014	0	0
Total 2010- 2014 Swains region catch (t) of net authorities that part in net buy-back program: >1		

## Townsville

Historical Townsville catch (t) from 2010-2014 of net authorities who's symbols and/ or a total licence package were surrendered as part of the net buy-back program are presented in Table 11 along with the percentage of the total regional catch (t) they represent.

The total 2014 catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities represented 5.8% of the total Townsville region net catch (t).

Table 11: Catch from 2010-2014 of authorities that participated in buy-back program in comparison to the total net catch of the individual Mapstone region.

Year	Total catch (t) attributed to surrendered net authorities	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered authorities
2010	63.8	9.5
2011	63.3	8.7
2012	58.0	7.8
2013	46.7	6.7
2014	28.5	5.8

Total 2010- 2014 Townsville region catch (t) of net authorities that part in net buy-back program: 260.2

## Summary of net catch of participating fishers

Table 13 provides a summary of the combined 2010-2014 net catch (t) by Mapstone region of authorities that participated in the net buy-back program and a comparison with the total net catch (t) recorded in that region during that period. Catch (t) equals the sum of net catch of participating authorities from 2010-2014 per region.

Table12: Summary of the total catch per region of net authorities that participated in the buy-back program.

Mapstone Region	Total catch (t) attributed to participating net authorities per region	Percentage (%) of regional catch attributed to surrendered authorities
Cairns	183.3	19.22
Capricorn Bunker	235.9	10.25
Far Northern	18.6	46.38
Gulf of Carpentaria	72.3	0.7
Hervey Bay	595.4	12.04
Mackay	197.31	17.74
South East	891.69	9.9
The Swains	0.01	25
Townsville	260.2	7.8

## Appendix 1: LNP election commitment: Safeguarding for Our Marine Resources

# LNP CANDO ACTION: SAFEGUARDING FOR OUR MARINE RESOURCES

**PART OF OUR PLAN TO  
GET QUEENSLAND BACK ON TRACK**



**A CanDo LNP will act to safeguard Queensland's marine resources for the future by ensuring we have an environmentally and economically sustainable fishing industry.**

**An LNP Government will invest \$10 million into a package which will help to restore the health and wellbeing of our fisheries and sustainability in the commercial fishing industry.**

The LNP will grow a four pillar economy across our industry, and understands the importance of a viable seafood industry and the interests of the over 750,000 Queenslanders who enjoy recreational fishing.

The tired 20 year Labor Government has ignored the needs of both Queensland seafood industry and our recreational fishers.

Most fishing activity occurs in the East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery, which operates up the entire Queensland east coast.

Fishery management arrangements are complex, however all stakeholders agree that a reduction in fishing pressure is an important step in improving the health of our fishery.

The LNP is committed to delivering a strong, viable, healthy and sustainable commercial fishing industry. Under the

Under the Bligh Labor Government the commercial fishing industry has struggled and many fishermen face an uncertain future.

The LNP is committed to the health and wellbeing of our fisheries and will undertake a \$9 million voluntary buyback program in consultation with the industry. The buyback

will target large mesh and gill nets with a special focus on important recreational fishing locations and areas of high conservation value.

In addition, to ensure the long term sustainability of our fisheries, we will invest up to \$1 million in a range of sustainability measures including enhanced monitoring of fisheries on a regional basis.

This voluntary buyback will deliver greater sustainability for the commercial fishing industry.

Importantly the removal of these nets will deliver positive conservation outcomes for dugongs, turtles and inshore dolphins in waters of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. There will be increased recreational fishing opportunities and a more profitable and sustainable commercial fishing industry.

The LNP understands fishing is one of the most popular pastimes in Queensland, with an estimated 750,000 recreational fishers in this State. Fishing is very much a part of life in Queensland.

It's time for a change. With your help a strong and united LNP Government will get Queensland back on track.

### LNP Policy Commitments:

- \$10 million targeted buyback of commercial fishing licences
- Restore the health of Queensland's fishery

Authorised by M.O'Dwyer, 66 Bowen St, Spring Hill, Qld, 4000.



[www.lnp.org.au](http://www.lnp.org.au)

## Appendix 2: Summary of other catch recorded by authorities who participated in the net buy-back program

Total catch (t) attributed to participating authorities		Total catch (t) reported per year	Percentage (%) catch (t) attributed to surrendered authorities
<b>2010</b>			
Beam Trawl	6.6	462.0	1.4
Line	39.8	2676.9	1.5
Otter Trawl	15.1	7203.6	0.2
Pot	145.3	2903.7	5.0
<b>2011</b>			
Beam Trawl	3.0	236.1	1.3
Line	32.4	2304.2	1.4
Otter Trawl	9.1	6459.1	0.1
Pot	167.4	3079.9	5.4
<b>2012</b>			
Beam Trawl	2.2	179.3	1.3
Line	48.7	2183.9	2.2
Otter Trawl	1.2	6536.0	>1
Pot	162.4	2897.9	5.6
<b>2013</b>			
Beam Trawl	5.0	164.9	3.0
Line	34.0	2317.1	1.5
Pot	67.7	2671.1	2.5
<b>2014</b>			
Beam Trawl	0.8	192.2	0.4
Line	20.1	2168.3	0.9
Pot	40.2	2322.8	1.7

### Appendix 3: Map showing the Mapstone Regions used during the East Coast Net Buy-back Program

