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ATTN: The Hon Anthony (Tony) Perrett MP
Queensland Minister for Primary Industries
1 William Street
Brisbane QLD 4000
By email: primaryindustries@ministerial.qld.gov.au

28 February 2025

Re: Engagement approach with the Crisafulli Government on fisheries policy in the Gulf of Carpentaria

Dear Minister Perrett

GOCCFA welcomes the Queensland Government's early commitments around agricultural output in Queensland. Queensland's commercial wild-caught fisheries and our supply chain have an important role to play in Queensland's primary production.

Industry initiatives:

Further to our correspondence of 11 December 2024 and with the commencement of the 2025 Gulf of Carpentaria (GOC) commercial fishing season, GOCCFA would like to provide an update on several industry initiatives underway. These are intended to support ongoing industry development, continue improving compliance and transparency, and support industry viability. At a high level, these include:

Initiative	Status
Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Gulf of Carpentaria Commercial Fishermen Association(GOCCFA) and the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) to facilitate coordinated	Completed 15 January 2025
Continued active communication with various members of the department on matter relating to IOM and Fish Monitoring activities	Ongoing
Pre-season industry forum in Karumba, including industry updates, GOCCFA Executive updates, and updates from the Department and CSIRO in relation to 2025 initiatives.	Completed 23 January 2025
Annual Threatened and Endangered Species ID and handling workshop delivered by the CSIRO	Completed 23 January 2025
Re-write of the Code of Conduct for GOC fisheries	Underway, to be completed by June 2025
Modernisation of Social, Industry and Website communication platforms	Underway, to be completed by June 2025

Industry is continuing to engage actively with all stakeholders, and we will provide further updates to government as these progress.

Areas of clarity required from the Department and the Queensland Government:

While we are encouraged by your Government's early commitments, there is an increasing list of issues and areas where industry is seeking clarity and levels of assurance from the Queensland Government and the Department.

Government statements of fundamental consequence to the industry requiring urgent clarification

There have been several statements made in relation to the future of the GOC commercial net fisheries that are of significant concern and that industry feels warrant urgent clarification.

- We seek a position from Minister Perrett to clarify statements made by your predecessor Minister Furner on the 16/11/23 that net fishing will cease on the East Coast, Great Sandy Strait and Gulf of Carpentaria by mid 2027. (Refer to 1:15 to 1:26 in the attached media file).
- We seek a position from Minister Perrett to clarify statements made by the now Director General Grahame Bolton during the 2023 consultation period regarding the future use of gillnets in Queensland and the assertion that the use of this gear type does not have a future in the Gulf of Carpentaria fisheries. (Refer comments at 10:10 to 11:05 in the following link: <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/qld-country-hour/qld-fisheries-defends-release-of-gulf-gill-net-draft-maps-despit/102969746>).

Commercial fisher participation in Harvest Strategy development

GOCCFA acknowledges the importance of developing fit for purpose Harvest Strategies for the L4, N3, and N12 fisheries, particularly in the context of the rushed and reckless implementation of the 2023 fishery reforms.

We note the Deputy Director General's scheduled visit on 4 March 2025 has now cancelled in which the DDG wished to engage with fishers to discuss the development of Harvest Strategies. Industry strongly supports the intent to engage. However, such engagement would ideally be undertaken with the fishing cohort at the annual general meeting at end of season or the pre-season meeting at the beginning of each fishing season. Owing the geographic spread of the fishery it is costly for fishers to attend such visits.

GoCCFA strongly supports the working group and the current representatives to take forward the broad views of the fishing cohort. With that in mind, GoCCFA formally requests the Department arrange an out of session 1 day meeting with current sitting **commercial working group members** prior to the next working group meeting to expedite the development of a harvest strategy for the GOC fisheries.

We have also outlined below a list of broader priorities and further suggestions for a more inclusive process for managing our resources which the commercial sector see as vital to sustainable fishing outcomes. We look forward to your assistance in progressing.

Net Fishery (N3 / N12)

- Prompt consideration by Minister Perrett's statement to use regulatory reform to reconsider net closure areas in the N3 fishery to ease net fishery compression and increased risks to over fishing of commercial and non-commercial species including TEPS in remaining grounds.
- Review and redesign of shark catch reporting policy to make more user friendly for fishers
- Immediate implementation of the Jewfish Bladder tagging system

Line Fishery (L4)

- Departments commitment on a timeline for conducting a stock assessment for the line Spanish Mackerel fishery in the GOC

Mud Crab Fishery (GC1)

- Immediate re-application and re-instatement of the fishery's WTO
- Implementation in conjunction with the GC1 holders of a 3 year trial Female Mud crab in the GOC fishery managed under the development permit.
- Implementation of a transshipment strategy for the GC1 fishery
- Removal of Investment warning in this GC1 fishery

Threatened Species

The commercial fishing sector is committed to the sustainability of the fishery and considers high practice standards as integral to our social license to operate.

The commercial sector already contributes significant data, access to our vessels for research and academic purposes, and knowledge of fishing grounds to key stakeholders to sustainable fishing outcomes.

However, we feel strongly that many key stakeholders to our collective fishery have not been compelled to participate in initiatives that are equally important to ensure the collective sustainability of the fishery.

Accordingly, in the context of threatened species and noting the industry's support and willingness to participate in the field trial of IOM, we have several key requests:

- Industry insists the current Field Trail Agreement is amended to ensure all data captured during the trail phase can only be accessed by the volunteer commercial fisher and the department and is not subject to freedom of information requests by third parties
- We request removal of Scalloped Hammerhead from the endangered listing, in the absence of the any scientific data to prove they are vulnerable. Concurrently, we seek research priority investment by committing industry to support government investment and scientific support of studying this species and on measuring population stocks of this species in the Gulf of Carpentaria.
- We request funding allocation to an immediate third party review of the Level 2 ERA for GOC Fisheries, as it is not fit for purpose nor reflective of species in GOC waters
- We suggest broader funding be committed to the development of a TEPS online training porthole for the Queensland Fishing Industry, where **owners, lessees and fishers** must undertake online training module covering species ID and handling practises. This would be compulsory for all fishers on water and undertaken annually and have a publicly available list of those fishers who have passed the competency test for transparency with all stakeholders and potential employers to access.

CHARTER OPERATORS

1. Enforcement of a compulsory logbook and the use VMS for all Charter operators in Gulf of Carpentaria waters.

RECREATIONAL

1. Commitment from the department for increased frequency to fish monitoring and boat ramp survey in remote areas such as Karumba and Weipa to better understand fishing impact from this sector in the region, with a particular focus during the peak tourism season.
2. Implementation of trial recreational licencing in the Gulf of Carpentaria, utilising a similar model as impoundment fisheries in Queensland. Monies collected could be contributed to restocking programs in Karumba for Barramundi and or research projects currently underway in the region.

FIRST NATIONS

1. Commitment from the department for increased investment and commitment from communities with particular focus on the take of Threatened and Endangered Species.



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We look forward to your response and would ask that any commercial fishing related correspondence to be forwarded to admin@goccfa.com.au to ensure your office and the Department receive prompt responses.

Yours sincerely

M. GATER

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