

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Yan to the Minister for Agribusiness and Fisheries:

NT Fisheries

- 1. Since the start of 2020, have NT Water Police or NT Fisheries been contacted with reports of suspected illegal activities observed in the NT Barramundi Fishery? If so, on how many occasions?**

NT Water Police (WPS) received seven reports. NT Fisheries received three reports.

- 2. On how many occasions did NT Water Police or NT Fisheries respond to these reports and conduct an inspection, both on water and at home port?**

The WPS responded and investigated to the seven reports it received, as well as to the three reports forwarded by NT Fisheries. Four on-water vessel inspections were conducted. A further 17 proactive compliance inspections in the Barramundi Fishery were conducted.

- 3. What resulted from these inspections? Was any evidence of illegal activity found? Have any charges been laid? Have any penalties been issued, if so, how many penalties, for what and how much was each penalty?**

From the 10 reports, there was one instance where offences could be verified with supporting evidence to support a prosecution (Gill Netting in Blue Mud Bay), however, the offender fled the NT prior to a prosecution brief being prepared.

- 4. For the current NT Barramundi Fishery season - have Vessel Monitoring Systems been installed on all vessels involved in the fishery's activities including the mother ship, the processing at sea ship, and the dories/tenders?**

Yes. Barramundi Licensees are required under Clause 21A (Barramundi Fishery Management Plan) to ensure Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) is installed, maintained and operating 'at all times' on each vessel, used under the License, unless written approval is granted by the Director. WPS is not aware of recent instances of operators utilising unregistered and non-compliant vessels in the Barramundi Fishery.

- 5. Were any of the Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) switched off at any time while the vessels were at sea (away from home port)?**

The Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) is contracted by NT Fisheries to monitor VMS and it works with operators to ensure VMS units are operational at all times. Any vessels wishing to switch off their units are required to complete, and have approved, a Temporary Switch Off (TSO) application.

There have been instances of VMS units 'not polling at all times' however it has not been possible to determine if they had been intentionally switched off. VMS units 'not polling' can be caused by technical issues such as unit failure or battery

malfunction. AFMA, NT Fisheries and WPS regularly contact Approved Operators to request information and resolve any deficiencies surrounding VMS.

- 6. If the Vessel Monitoring Systems were found to be turned off at any stage, have any penalties been issued? If so, how many penalties, for what and how much was each penalty?**

As per response to Q5.

- 7. If the Vessel Monitoring Systems were found to be turned off at any stage, for what proportion of time were the Vessel Monitoring Systems turned off?**

N/A as per response to Q5. However the total number of non-polling days as a percentage of total polling days is estimated at about 98 % for the period.

Fisheries Division is working with its business improvement team and the AFMA to further automate and improve reporting systems to improve efficiencies and enable better interrogation of VMS data.

- 8. Are gillnets required to have a GPS tracker fitted? If so, have NT Water Police or NT Fisheries conducted any inspections of nets for such GPS devices since the start of 2020?**

No.

- 9. How many observer trips have been conducted in the NT Barramundi Fishery since the start of 2020? If observer trips were conducted, can a copy of the reports produced by the Observer on board be provided?**

Observer trips were scheduled but were cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions. No observer trips were conducted in the period.

- 10. What is the number of NT Fisheries Department staff that have resigned each year since 1 January 2020, up to and including the date of these questions, including staff that have tendered their resignations but are yet to leave? Please provide a breakdown of the substantive levels of those resignations.**

There were a total of 31 separations from Fisheries over this period, predominantly from the completion of fixed term contract positions (14), staff being successfully promoted to new roles (11) and retirements (4).

In terms of levels this was comprised: Executive Contract Officer (1), Senior Administrative Officer 1 (1), Administrative Officer 7 (2), Administrative Officer 6 (3) Administrative Officer 5 (4), Administrative Officer 4 (1), Administrative Officer 2 (2), Professional 4 (1), Professional 3 (1), Professional 1 (1), Technical Officer 4 (1), Technical Officer 3 (3), Technical Officer 2 (1), Survey Interviewers (8), Apprentice (1).