Better Chance of Landing a Trophy Barramundi

Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis today announced the Northern Territory Government’s proposal to expand commercial barramundi fishery closures, cementing a pre-election commitment to buy back more commercial barramundi licenses.

The closures are around the Adelaide River, Leaders Creek and Fog Bay area, as well as closures to key creeks in Chambers and Finke Bays.

They form part of a package of measures that government has proposed to complement its commitment to buyback commercial barramundi licenses.

The expansion of commercial barramundi fishery closures creates an uninterrupted closure from Cape Hotham to the existing Finniss River closure.

“Recreational fishing is a huge part of our fabulous Territory lifestyle and more popular here than probably anywhere else in the world,” Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis said.

“This is why the NT Government is committed to and determined to make it even better, and this is one of a raft of measures we have introduced since 2001 to improve recreational fishing.”

Other significant recreational improvements since 2001 include:

- Significant upgrades to recreational fishing infrastructure
- Major expansion of artificial reef program
- Buy-Back of 15 commercial in-shore fishing licences
- Expanded areas closed to commercial fishing
- Opposed unjustified marine protected areas

Mr Vatskalis said the closure of key creeks in Chambers/Finke bays will supplement the existing Sampan/Tommycut closure and will provide exclusive access to these creeks that are renowned for their trophy size fish.

"These proposed changes give anglers an even better chance to catch that fish of a lifetime" Mr Vatskalis said.

The proposed creek closures in Chambers Bay include Marsh and Swim Creeks, as well as Thrings, Carmor and Love Creeks in Finke Bay.
Commercial fishing will still continue along the vast flats in Chambers and Finke Bays, which is the most important area for the supply of 'fresh on ice' barramundi and threadfin salmon.

The Government's package also incorporates a prohibition on the use of large (8inch/200mm) gill nets. This measure will help ensure large barramundi are not caught in commercial nets, meaning more large fish are available exclusively to recreational fishers.

The Government is also looking into the application of Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS) which use GPS technology to track the location of commercial vessels. VMS may improve fishery monitoring and demonstrate compliance with closure lines.

"Our barramundi stocks are sustainable and this balanced package of measures is all about avoiding conflict in high use areas and allocating 'trophy size fish' (1m) to anglers" Mr Vatskalis said.

Mr Vatskalis said the NT Government would also establish a fisheries resource sharing framework for the consideration of future requests to re-allocate our fisheries resources in ensuring optimal economic, environmental and social benefits.

The announcement of the expanded commercial fishery closures and other initiatives allows the NT Government to commence the buy-back of commercial barramundi licenses.

Fishers will be able to have their say when the measures are released for a statutory 28 day consultation period.

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