TERRITORY WELCOMES LEGISLATION REVIEW

The Territory Government has welcomed an announcement today by the Commonwealth to consider an urgent change to legislation providing more powers for the detention of vessels suspected of illegally fishing in Australian waters.

The changes will enable Australian authorities to act against illegal, unregulated or unreported vessels carrying fish products in Australian waters, regardless of the origin of catch.

The Territory Government, commercial and recreational fishing groups have repeatedly raised concerns about the ongoing threats posed by an influx of illegal foreign fishing activity.

Illegal foreign fishing not only threatens Australia’s fish stocks but also our bio-security.

Last year over 13,000 foreign fishing vessels were sighted in Australian waters – this is an alarming figure that shows the problem will only get worse unless immediate action is taken.

Acting Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Chris Burns said he’d welcome any move by the Federal Government to help stem the flow of illegal foreign fishing vessels.

“We need to place the onus of proof on operators of foreign fishing vessels, including larger ‘mother ships’ that may be supporting smaller illegal foreign fishing vessels.

“Foreign vessels should be required to prove they have not operated illegally and have obtained fish from a legitimate source.

“Federal authorities should also be granted additional powers to remove any loopholes, should illegal foreign fishing vessels or ‘mother ships’ be found operating in the Australian waters,” said Dr Burns.

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