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Baby barra bound for Bathurst Island

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Around 145,000 barramundi fingerlings are making their way to their new home on Bathurst Island today, as part of the latest shipment being transferred to the Territory’s first commercial caged barramundi farm.

The shipment includes the one millionth barramundi fingerling produced this season.

The Minister for Fisheries, Kon Vatskalis, oversaw the delicate relocation this morning as the fishy cargo was stored in a converted milk tanker and transferred to the Tiwi Barge depot in Berrimah.

“This is the second shipment this week of barramundi fingerlings to Marine Harvest’s cage culture farm at Port Hurd on Bathurst Island,” he said.

“In just one week, we’ve sent off 290,000 barra fingerlings for production at the Port Hurd farm. That’s a lot of fish!”

Mr Vatskalis said international company, Marine Harvest - the farming branch of the world’s largest aquaculture company, Nutreco - developed the first barramundi cage grow-out farm in the Northern Territory in 2000 as a pilot project.

“The Territory Government supported the project through a capital grant and the expansion of Darwin Aquaculture Centre, to ensure it could provide barramundi fingerlings to the Port Hurd farm.

“Initial production targets aimed for 1000 tonnes of barramundi per annum, however Marine Harvest has a long-term vision of producing 10 000 tonnes per annum.”

Mr Vatskalis said barramundi production at the Port Hurd farm is currently up to 25 tonnes per week of three to five kilogram and plate sized fish.

“This operation employs 12 full time and eight casual employees, but there will be further job opportunities for locals as production increases and new farms are developed in the future,” he said.

“This financial year, Marine Harvest will invest a further $3 million into the economy to improve and develop farm operations.

“The Government is pleased to work with companies like Marine Harvest to keep the Territory moving ahead.”

Marine Harvest will soon sign a new two-year deal with the Darwin Aquaculture Centre to supply its barramundi fingerlings. The company indicating its requirements will increase from one million up to two million fingerlings per annum.