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New fish and drag net limits for recreational fishing

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The Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Peter Toyne today announced upcoming changes to the Northern Territory’s general fish possession limit and the allowable dimensions of amateur drag nets.

Dr Toyne said the changes reflected the government’s commitment to the long-term sustainability of aquatic resources.

“These changes are supported by the Amateur Fishermen’s Association of the NT and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Fishing and were the subject of discussion papers that invited public comment over a three month period,” he said.

Dr Toyne said managed finfish (barramundi, black jewfish and Spanish mackerel) would be included in the Northern Territory’s 30 fish general personal possession limit, commencing 1 January 2002, and a personal possession limit of five golden snapper would also be introduced on that date.

“Golden snapper will be included in the general possession limit as a managed species,” he said.

“The existing personal possession limit of 10 mud crabs and the 30 mud crab boat limit, which applies when three or more people are aboard a vessel will remain outside the general possession limit.”

Dr Toyne said a personal possession limit of 10 tropical rock lobsters and a boat limit of 30 tropical rock lobsters, when three or more people are aboard, would be introduced on 1 January 2002.

“This will be introduced in addition to a 10 litre personal possession limit for molluscs, with shells intact,” he said.

“With the exception of tropical rock lobsters and molluscs, existing species which are exempt from the general possession limit will remain.

“These will include:

- Crabs and prawns;
- Bait fish (mullet, whiting, garfish, pilchards, sardines and herrings);
- Marine bream (*Acanthopagrus sp*); and,
- Echinoderms.”

Dr Toyne said amateur dragnets may currently be up to 40 metres long, have a drop of up to two metres, a mesh size of up to 65 millimetres and may not be used inside creek or river mouths.

“The currently allowable mesh size often results in the fatal capture by the gills of juvenile or undersize fish,” he said.

“Smaller dimensions will reduce the capture of such fish but still enable people to gather bait with this type of net.

“Owners of amateur drag nets will have two years to modify or replace their nets so that they do not exceed 16 metres in length, two metres in drop or 28 millimetres in
Dr Toyne said the proposals for the possession limit and amateur drag net changes reflected forward thinking by recreational fishers, who were clearly mindful of the need to utilise aquatic resources sustainably.

For further advice on these upcoming changes, telephone the Fisheries Division on 89992372.