BUDGET A DISAPPOINTMENT FOR MARINE RANGERS

Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Kon Vatskalis has welcomed the Federal Government's injection of $389 million into the fight against illegal fishing in Australia's northern waters.

However, he has expressed disappointment that only $6.9 million has been set aside for the Indigenous marine ranger program.

"I am disappointed at the way the Federal Government has devalued the role of the Indigenous marine rangers.

"They are ideally placed to apprehend illegal foreign fishermen but have instead been given the token task of monitoring the bio-security risk of illegal fishermen.

"Their work has been severely undercut," he said.

Mr Vatskalis said $389 million should achieve more than just doubling the apprehension rate of illegal foreign fishermen.

"Last year more than 13,000 illegal foreign fishing vessels were sighted in Australia's northern waters - only 280 of those vessels were apprehended.

"If the Federal Government's only goal is to double that number, then it should take another look at how it has allocated the money.

"100% of all illegal foreign fishing vessels that reach the Territory coastline should be apprehended - doubling the number is simply not enough," said Mr Vatskalis.

Contact: Gemma Buxton 0401 110 064