Budget 2006 builds on the Martin Government’s commitment to recreational anglers and innovative research programs to ensure sustainable fisheries.

Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries Kon Vatskalis said more than $1 million will be spent over the next three years for the buy back of inshore netting licences across the Territory.

There are currently 14 coastal net licences and two bait net licences in operation in the Territory.

“This is great news for Territory anglers – our priority is to remove coastal net fishing from Darwin Harbour and Shoal Bay to increase access for the recreational and tourism fishing sectors,” Mr Vatskalis said. “Fishing is the lure of the Territory and removing coastal netting from these prime fishing spots will greatly benefit recreational anglers.”

Budget 2006 also focuses on the implementation of major Fisheries research projects, ensuring future management practices are based on the best available information.

**Highlights of Budget 2006 include:**

- buy back of inshore netting licences
- $161 000 for continuation and enhancement of the world-leading Genetag Project, (sampling fish and sharks without catching them) as featured on ABC TV’s *The Inventors* program.
- the completion of the black Jewfish aggregation and tagging study
- $96 000 for monitoring of the mud crab fishery to assess changes to the *Mud Crab Fishery Management Plan*
- supporting the development of a monitoring protocol for the shark fishery
- development of a harvest strategic framework for the NT’s major fisheries
- research into the NODAVIRUS disease which can affect farmed finfish stock

The Government has also committed $500,000 in Budget 06 to enhance recreational fishing infrastructure.

Mr Vatskalis said other research projects such as examining the survival of ‘catch and release’ barra and the stock structure of threadfin salmon are also planned.

“The Martin Labor Government is delivering on its 2005 election commitments to make sure the Territory remains the number one place for fishing and a first class player in research innovation,” he said.

“Budget 2006 is good for fishing and good for Territorians.”

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