IMPORTED PRAWNS COULD DECIMATE OUR FISHERY

Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis has today supported calls for the Federal Government to ban the import of Chinese and South East Asian raw green prawns into Australia, due to a potential disease outbreak.

Recent tests on imported raw prawns have shown that some are infected with deadly exotic prawn diseases, known as the “foot and mouth disease of prawns”.

Mr Vatskalis said the imported prawns have the potential to decimate our local prawn fishery.

He said the threat to the Territory’s prawn industry rests with recreational fishermen who use imported raw prawns as bait.

“Recreational fishermen use imported prawns as bait when fishing, potentially infecting the fishery with these terrible diseases.

“Imported green prawns end up in our waters as bait or berley and become a vehicle for the introduction of these exotic and serious diseases to other healthy prawns.

“The on-going practice of importing green prawns from countries known to be affected by these diseases presents a serious threat to Australia’s biosecurity.

“I strongly urge local fishers not to buy imported raw prawns for bait. While they may be inexpensive at the local supermarket, the long term price will be much greater.

“We all know that buying local products is good for local business. So let’s support our suppliers and prevent the collapse of our prawn fishery.

“I must make it very clear that we are not talking about a threat to humans from the consumption of imported raw prawns. They are fine to eat - theses diseases only threaten our wild and farmed prawns.

“Territory Fisheries Officers will be monitoring the situation, but I am calling on a total ban on the import of raw prawns until a disease-free status can be guaranteed by stricter quarantine protocols,” said Mr Vatskalis.

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