MARTIN GOVERNMENT “HOOKED” ON FISHING…

Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, today told anglers attending the 2005 Amateur Fishermen’s Association of the NT (AFANT) Annual General Meeting that the Territory Government had committed more than $1.5 million towards improving recreational fishing infrastructure over the last three years.

Mr Vatskalis said apart from new fishing infrastructure the Government was also opening up additional coastal access for Top End anglers.

“We also said we would close one major coastal river to commercial barramundi netting. But we have closed both the McArthur and Adelaide Rivers.

“I am delighted to say we are delivering on our election promises to Territory anglers,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“Fishing is the lure of the Territory and an important part of our great Territory lifestyle, which is why this Government has put its money where its mouth is when it comes to recreational fishing,” said Mr Vatskalis.

Among the promises the Martin Government has delivered to Territory fishermen are:

- Buffalo Creek boat ramp – power extended to the site from Lee Point Road to provide additional lighting and a new 24-hour, seven-day a week security compound managed by a full-time caretaker;
- Dinah Beach boat ramp – upgraded with the launch ramp extended to a two-lane facility and the car park expanded;
- Adelaide River closed to commercial barramundi netting;
- McArthur River closed to commercial barramundi netting;
- Increased barramundi stocking of selected waterways including, Manton Dam, Lake Todd, Darwin Harbour and Lake Bennett.

Mr Vatskalis told fishermen Rocky Creek boat ramp near Borroloola had now been refurbished, while Mule Creek boat ramp is next on the list.

Funding has been provided to Palmerston City Council to commission Sinclair Knight Mertz to consult with fishermen about options to develop the Palmerston Boat Ramp into the future.
“We have increased opportunities for land-based anglers at the Elizabeth River Bridge at Palmerston with improved access,” he said.

“I’m also pleased to say the much-anticipated access to Point Stuart is expected to open this Dry Season. It’s something recreational fishermen have been requesting for years.”

“Plans for access to the coast near the Perron Islands, south of Darwin, are almost finalised. My colleague, Lands and Planning Minister, Dr Chris Burns, recently announced the acquisition of land near Channel Point for fishing and camping,” Mr Vatskalis said.

Another commitment fulfilled by the Martin Government is the implementation of the River Watch Program. It is a scheme encouraging anglers to report any aquatic environmental concerns or illegal activity.

“We now have River Watch Centres established on the Daly, Mary, Roper and Victoria Rivers. Each is stocked with a range of fishing, boating, tidal and aquatic environmental information.

“I’m proud to say the program will be extended to Adelaide, South and East Alligator Rivers later this year.”

“We recognise the important role AFANT plays, which is why we have significantly increased funding to $173,000 per annum and provide office space at Malak

“The Martin Labor Government is moving the Territory ahead and will continue to work with AFANT to ensure great fishing into the future.”

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