



Media Statement



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BRYAN GREEN
Minister for Primary Industries and Water

PROFESSOR COLIN BUXTON
Director, TAFI

Research Project into Gillnetting Begins

The Minister for Primary Industries and Water Bryan Green said today a major study now underway into gillnetting would help determine future management of Tasmania's scalefish fishery.

Mr Green said the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute (TAFI) had started a three year study to better understand the impacts of gillnetting and the implications for by-catch and biodiversity.

"Maintaining sustainable fisheries is vital for Tasmania's economic and social future," Mr Green said.

Mr Green said that in recent years there had been a number of initiatives introduced to help reduce by-catch, fish wastage and promote responsible fishing practices.

These changes included the banning of recreational night netting in most areas and more recently the introduction of maximum soak times for gillnets following the 2009 scalefish review.

Mr Green said the new research would help determine whether recent management changes were meeting objectives and provide important information about gillnet usage prior to the next review of the scalefish fishery in 2014.

TAFI Director Professor Colin Buxton said in Tasmania commercial and recreational fishers used gillnets for a variety of finfish species.

Currently there are around 150 commercial operators who report gillnet use with an average catch of 200 tonnes of scalefish a year.

Prof Buxton said over 10,000 recreational net licences were issued last year.

“Previous surveys indicate that recreational fishers targeted much the same species as commercial operators.

“Despite recent improvements in the management of the gillnet fishery there have been conspicuous declines in the abundance of key gillnet species such as bastard trumpeter. There are also increasing community concerns about the ecological impacts of gillnetting,” Prof Buxton said.

The research, led by TAFI researcher Dr Jeremy Lyle, is funded through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation on behalf of the Australian Government.

Key objectives include a synthesis of existing information, assessment of by-catch levels associated with the main commercial gillnet fisheries, implications of recent management changes on recreational netting practices, and relationships between soak times, capture condition and survival of by-catch.

“This study is being undertaken in close collaboration with the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, commercial and recreational fishing sectors and will involve surveys of fishers, catch sampling and research fishing trials.

“This information will be integrated to conduct an ecological risk assessment to evaluate the impacts of gillnetting on the biodiversity of key inshore ecosystems and to develop strategies to mitigate identified impacts.”