



## Australian Government

### Department of the Environment and Water Resources

The Hon Tim Mulherin MP  
Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries  
GPO Box 46  
BRISBANE QLD 4001

Dear Minister

I am writing to you as Delegate of the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources in relation to the re-assessment of the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Developmental Finfish Trawl Fishery (GOCDFTF) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

The GOCDFTF was first assessed by the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Water Resources (formerly the Department of the Environment and Heritage) in November 2004 under Parts 13 and 13A of the EPBC Act in accordance with the Australian Government *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries*. This assessment was based on the submission provided by the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F). In light of a number of concerns that needed to be addressed to manage environmental risks in the long term, the GOCDFTF was declared an approved Wildlife Trade Operation (WTO) under Part 13A of the EPBC Act. This declaration allowed the export of product from the fishery for a period of three years. The Delegate also accredited the GOCDFTF management regime in force under the *Queensland Fisheries Act 1994* and the *Queensland Fisheries Regulation 1995* under Part 13 of the EPBC Act in relation to protected species interactions.

In August 2007, DPI&F submitted the 2005, 2006 and 2007 Annual Status Reports for the GOCDFTF for assessment under the EPBC Act to allow continued export approval for this fishery. The submission has been assessed for the purposes of the protected species provisions of Part 13 and the wildlife trade provisions of Part 13A of the EPBC Act.

I am pleased to advise that assessment of the fishery is now complete. The new assessment report will be available on the Department of the Environment and Water Resources website at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/coasts/fisheries/index.html>.

Given there has been no changes to the accredited management regime for the GOCDFTF and there continues to be relatively low numbers of protected species interactions reported in the fishery, I consider that the existing Part 13 accreditation for the GOCDFTF, in relation to protected species provisions under the EPBC Act, still applies.



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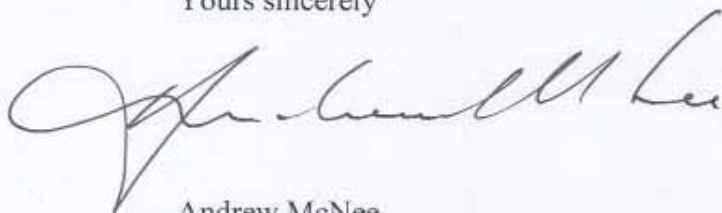
In considering the current management arrangements, I am satisfied that the operation of the fishery is consistent with the objects of the wildlife trade provisions in Part 13A of the EPBC Act. I am also satisfied that it is unlikely to be detrimental to the survival or conservation status of any taxon to which the fishery operation relates, or threaten any relevant ecosystem over the next three years.

Performance against the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* is adequate, however there are a number of issues that need to be addressed to contain environmental risks in the longer term. Hence, I propose to declare the fishery an approved WTO under Part 13A of the EPBC Act. This declaration would allow the export of product from the fishery for the next three years. I have made the declaration subject to the conditions at **Attachment A**.

While there are some environmental risks associated with this fishery, I consider that DPI&F is committed to addressing these issues and is already taking proactive steps in some areas. Officers from our two departments have discussed key areas requiring ongoing attention. In addition to the conditions to the WTO declaration, I understand that they have agreed to a number of recommended actions, focusing on addressing key issues outstanding from the last assessment, to be implemented before the next Australian Government review of the GOCDFTF. The recommendations at **Attachment B** have been an important factor in my decision to declare the GOCDFTF a WTO and I look forward to receiving your confirmation that they will be implemented.

I would like to thank you for the constructive way in which your officials have approached this assessment.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Andrew McNee', written in a cursive style.

Andrew McNee  
Delegate of the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources

28 November 2007



**Conditions on the Wildlife Trade Operation Declaration for the  
Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Developmental Finfish Trawl Fishery  
(GOCDFTF)**

1. Operation of the GOCDFTF will be carried out in accordance with the Queensland *Fisheries Act 1994* and the Queensland *Fisheries Regulation 1995*.
2. The Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) to inform the Department of the Environment and Water Resources (DEW) of any intended amendments to the management arrangements that may affect the criteria on which *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* decisions are based.
3. DPI&F to produce and present reports to DEW annually as per Appendix B to the *Guidelines for the Ecologically Sustainable Management of Fisheries - 2nd Edition*.

**Recommendations to the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (DPI&F) on the ecologically sustainable management of the Queensland Gulf of Carpentaria Developmental Finfish Trawl Fishery (GOCDFTF)**

The GOCDFTF is a relatively well-managed fishery with a range of management measures to promote the ecologically sustainable harvesting of species from the fishery. These measures include: limited entry, a total allowable catch for quota species, limits on the species that can be retained, in-possession and minimum size limits for some byproduct species, and gear restrictions.

The following recommendations have been made to further strengthen the effectiveness of the management arrangements for the GOCDFTF and minimise environmental risks in the medium term. Unless a specific time frame is provided in the recommendation each recommendation must be addressed before the next review of the GOCDFTF in 2010.

1. DPI&F to pursue a reduction in bycatch in the GOCDFTF. DPI&F, in consultation with the Gulf Management Advisory Committee to trial bycatch reduction devices, including turtle excluder devices, in the GOCDFTF by 30 June 2009.
2. DPI&F to review available data on mangrove jack reproduction, size and spatial distribution in the Gulf of Carpentaria and investigate appropriate management responses to ensure current harvest levels are sustainable.
3. DPI&F to continue to improve estimates of recreational and Indigenous harvest. Once available, DPI&F to take estimates of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, recreational and Indigenous harvests into account in setting catch limits to mitigate any risks identified.
4. DPI&F to incorporate revised performance measures and reference points related to minimising protected species interactions in the Performance Measurement System for the GOCDFTF by 30 December 2008.