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ASSOCIATION

26th August 2015.

AUSSIE PRAWN FARMERS REEF ACTION PLAN

Australia's prawn farmers will develop a 'Stewardship Action Plan', to be adopted by the entire prawn farming industry – to further develop its social licence to operate, to contribute to long-term improvement in water quality and coastal habitats in the catchments adjacent the Great Barrier Reef and to ensure its activities have no detrimental impact on the health and resilience of the reef.

At The Joint Select Committee on Northern Australia's public hearing into opportunities for expanding the aquaculture industry in Northern Australia in Brisbane today, Australian Prawn Farmers Association (APFA) Executive Officer Helen Jenkins confirmed the comprehensive plan would be professionally developed and engage all stakeholders and be a plan that would encourage aquaculture development particularly for North Queensland and Northern Australia.

"APFA has previously called for support from the Federal Government to commit to this plan and has received support from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and CSIRO for its implementation."

"While commitment from the government hasn't been forthcoming, we will pursue other means of funding for what we believe is the only way forward for an industry that, while adopting world's best farming techniques, has been stuck in the doldrums, with no new farms approved in Queensland for the last 15 years," Ms Jenkins said.

Ms Jenkins said APFA fielded numerous enquiries about investment in prawn farming in Australia, but because of the complex regulatory system that involves both State and Federal government agencies, investors had shied away from any commitment.

"That's potentially costing the economy millions of dollars in lost revenue and thousands of lost jobs."

"One of the core strengths of the prawn farming industry is that it has developed with minimal environmental impact - 42 rigorous independent scientific studies over the last 20 years have found that any minor prawn farm effluent is rapidly assimilated into estuarine waters. Unlike other agriculture we do not use any pesticides or herbicides.

"Despite this, it is incumbent on all direct and indirect users of the Great Barrier Reef environment to mitigate risks associated with their activities. The proposed Stewardship Plan is the vehicle for prawn farmers to ensure that."

Ms Jenkins said APFA's Stewardship Action Plan was consistent with the key objective for water quality under the Reef 2050 Long-term Sustainability Plan.

"If we can break the current regulatory impasse, growth of prawn farming can realistically increase from \$70m to \$412m annually within just a few short years".

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