



13th February 2020

Collaboration brings FNQ maritime safety improvements

Collaboration between authorities and industry education are combining to help improve the safety of commercial fishing operations in remote areas of Far North Queensland.

Earlier this month the Australian Maritime Safety Authority, Queensland Water Police and Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol conducted joint marine safety patrols in Torres Strait and the Gulf of Carpentaria.

Those patrols targeted riverine and shoreline commercial fishing ahead of the 2020 Gulf Barramundi fishing season. Officers from the three agencies inspected 30 boats across nine different crab and barramundi operations in the Mitchell, Holroyd and Love rivers, Weipa and Mapoon.

The on-water inspections ran from 30th January to, 5th February and followed similar patrols back in April and August 2019.

AMSA Operations North Manager Greg Witherall said over the past year many of the operators had actively engaged with AMSA and attended free safety management workshops in townships around Queensland.

“Those workshops focused on the safety equipment needed for these operations, the importance of identifying the unique risks associated with them and providing mitigation strategies,” Mr Witherall said.

“Combined with the regular on-water patrols, we’re starting to see a reduction in the number of safety breaches under the Marine Safety (Domestic Commercial Vessel) National Law Act – for these individual operations.”

Mr Witherall said across the two patrols in 2019, one operator had 15 boats inspected and 195 deficiencies across their fleet. When AMSA officers returned to the operator in January 2020, almost all of those deficiencies had been rectified.

“This is a good outcome and on top of that, we’ve had positive feedback from operators who say the joint inspections help reduce the regulatory burden on their day-to-day operations,” Mr Witherall said.

“By heading out on the water together, the individual agencies can maximise the amount of time operators are spending fishing for their small businesses.

“We all have a vested interest in making these operations safer and by collaborating with other agencies and educating industry, we can achieve that together.

“Riverine and shoreline fishing operations in remote areas might be out of sight but their safety shouldn’t be out of mind.”

