

## FISHERS INNOVATION TO HELP MIGRATING WHALES

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**12 SEPTEMBER 2019**

East-Coast Australian commercial fishers are getting together tomorrow in Sydney with lead scientists from across Australia to look at innovative ways to reduce whale entanglements. The Professional Fishermen's Association of NSW (PFA) advised that through investment by the Commonwealth Government's "National Landcare Program – marine grant" and the Commonwealth Marine Park Fisheries Assistance program, the PFA and OceanWatch Australia are working together to hold a workshop that will showcase new and innovative gear technology, and discuss similar gear trials from across Australia and the world. The workshop will lead to identification of best suited gear, appropriate to NSW fishing operations, with the intent to start gear trials shortly thereafter.

Tricia Beatty, Chief Executive Officer for the PFA today said "From devices designed to automatically cut the line, to pots that use no ropes at all, there is some exciting technology out there that we want to trial to mitigate the possibility of whale entanglements".

In the past, our industry was hampered in trying to reduce whale entanglements due to restrictive fisheries regulation that required fishing floats to remain on the surface of the sea, as well as the significant costs associated with the new technologies. To reduce entanglements the industry voluntarily adopted techniques such as leaded weights and avoidance of high-risk areas during peak migration periods to reduce the likelihood of entanglements. However, due to the health of whale populations and their increasing numbers, the entanglements have also increased despite industry's best efforts.

Through the recent NSW Marine Estate Management Authority's strategy, the Commonwealth grants and the efforts of the PFA and OceanWatch Australia, practical discussions are now finally being held to look to remove restrictive legislation and to provide permits and assistance for fishers to trial these new gear types.

"Fishers are keen to get going on the gear trials – no one wants harm to come to the whales. The workshop has been 18 months in the planning, and we are now finally able to hold it due to the Commonwealth Grants assistance and the agreement from NSW DPI to grant permits to trials these new gears," said Ms Beatty.

Ms Lowri Pryce, CEO of OceanWatch Australia agreed and said, "The fishers have been lining up to attend the workshop, with lots of great ideas and innovative solutions. OceanWatch Australia is proud to be assisting the fishing industry in finding these solutions"

For media enquire please contact Tricia Beatty, Chief Executive Officer of the PFA on 0429 303 371 or email [ceo@pfai.com.au](mailto:ceo@pfai.com.au) .

**PFA providing effective representation on NSW commercial wild harvest fishing to all levels of government and other key stakeholders**