



**Kon Vatskalis**

MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRY AND FISHERIES

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## **NT PROPOSAL TO FIGHT ILLEGAL FISHERS**

Minister for Primary Industry and Fisheries, Kon Vatskalis has called on the Federal Government to carefully consider a proposal by the NT to assist in the fight against illegal foreign fishing incursions.

The Territory Government has sent a funding submission to the Federal Minister for Fisheries, Senator Ian Macdonald, seeking \$11.29 million to expand the Northern Territory Marine Ranger Program.

Mr Vatskalis said the marine rangers' intimate knowledge of remote coastal areas and experience in monitoring and surveillance means they are ideally placed to assist Federal agencies in efforts to combat illegal fishing activities.

"Over 8000 vessels were sighted by Coastwatch last financial year and yesterday Senator Ian Macdonald announced only 280 of those vessels were apprehended. If more funding is put towards expanding the ranger program, that number is sure to increase.

"Marine ranger groups from across the Territory have detected and in some cases assisted with the apprehension of illegal foreign fishing vessels. Extra resources based throughout the Territory will assist Federal authorities in responding rapidly to sightings of illegal foreign fishing vessels close to our coastline.

"This is an opportunity for the Territory and Federal Government to work in a collaborative and constructive manner to deal with the threat of illegal fishing.

"It will also provide more jobs for Territorians, with the creation of 29 full-time and 14 part-time positions for Indigenous people living in remote areas of the Territory," said Mr Vatskalis.

The submission requests \$11.29 million over four years and includes the purchase of seven appropriate vessels and other field equipment and fully paid staff and training costs for marine ranger groups.

He said if the proposal is accepted, it would help increase the capacity of the Federal Government to deter foreign fishing incursions in Australia's northern waters.

"Given that the NT coastline spans some 10,000 kilometres, the ongoing challenges faced by Federal agencies in maintaining effective surveillance operations is significant. The Federal Government should accept this proposal to help with the fight against illegal foreign fishing," he said.

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