



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for Environment Protection, Heritage and the Arts

PG/21

5 March 2010

GUTHALUNGRA PRAWN FARM APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

Environment Protection Minister Peter Garrett today approved a prawn farm in Guthalungra subject to 19 strict conditions to ensure environmental protection for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area, listed migratory and threatened species and the Commonwealth marine environment, while creating important jobs for the region.

"The conditions I have placed on this aquaculture development, combined with good project design, will ensure that water quality in Abbot Bay, north of Bowen, will not be further degraded by this project and will set an important example of best practice environmentally sustainable development, Mr Garrett said.

"Before the facility is built, the design and operation arrangements must be independently assessed, and certified to be able to meet the approved limits of nutrients and sediments entering the bay.

"Any water used in the prawn farm will undergo complete treatment through sand filtration, sedimentation and settlement ponds, before it is returned to the bay, importantly with no net increase in nutrient and sediment load.

"Under the conditional approval granted today, Pacific Reef Fisheries will be required to monitor seagrass, coral and water quality in Abbot Bay, and provide regular results to my department.

"Should the levels of nutrients and sediment entering the bay from the facility increase to above those I approved, operations must be reduced or stop immediately, the incident must be reported to my department; and a review of processes must be done."

Mr Garrett said the building of the facility would be staged to ensure these requirements can be met.

"This is an important development, but given its environmentally sensitive location immediately adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, I have decided that the development should be completed in stages so that its impacts can be closely monitored. Therefore, Pacific Reef Fisheries will only be able to proceed to the next stage of its development once it demonstrates to my department that it has achieved no net increase over a full production cycle," he said.

"The Great Barrier Reef brings billions of dollars each year to the Australian economy and generates a huge number of jobs.

"However, the Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report released last year shows the reef is under serious pressure from many factors, including the decline of water quality because of increased levels of sediments and nutrients.

"The Reef must be protected not only as a priceless natural resource, but as a fundamental part of the Queensland economy.

"This project demonstrates that positive environmental results can be achieved while also supporting employment and local economies."

Fed: Prawn farm gets Garrett's approval with strict conditions

Federal Environment Minister PETER GARRETT has approved Australia's largest prawn farm .. despite concerns about the impact of the 40 million dollar facility on the Great Barrier Reef.

Pacific Reef Fisheries plans to build 259 land-based aquaculture ponds .. each covering one hectare .. close to the Elliot River at Guthalungra north of Bowen.

The facility is set to grow two-thousand-500 tonnes of black tiger prawns by 2012 and inject 29 million dollars a year into Queensland's economy.

Mr GARRETT says the plan has been approved with 19 strict conditions to protect the World Heritage area.

The conditions include the monitoring seagrass and coral and water quality in Abbot Bay.

(EDS: REISSUING TO UPDATE TURNOVER OF THE FARM IN PAR 3, BASED ON UPDATED INFORMATION FROM MR GARRETT'S OFFICE)

AAP RTV gd/wz

ABC Rural

ENVIRONMENT GROUP BACKS GARRETT'S DECISION ON PRAWN FARM

Monday, 08/03/2010

The World Wildlife Fund says it's satisfied government conditions on a proposed prawn farm near Bowen in North Queensland are enough to protect the Great Barrier Reef.

Over the weekend, Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett gave approval for the Pacific Reef prawn farm, which will be built in a World Heritage Area.

Piet Fillet, from the WWF, says the organisation is relieved the minister imposed 19 conditions on the farm.

But he's still concerned about increasing industrial development in the region.

"This is just but one activity in this whole region, and that's what's really drawn our attention to the concern about the whole footprint of foreshadowed activity in the Abbot Point area."

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