

QUESTION ON NOTICE
No. 876
Asked on 26 November 2014

DR DOUGLAS asked the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (MR McVEIGH)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the recent trapping of two platypuses by an opera house trap in the Nerang River—

- (1) How many platypus have died in these nets during the past 12 months?
- (2) Are there any plans to ban the use of opera house nets and, if so, what are these plans?

ANSWER:

- (1) The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry does not record captures or deaths of platypus. However, I am aware of two reports of platypus deaths in the last year, one at Caboolture involving a lost opera house trap allegedly responsible for the death of one platypus and a recent event at Springbrook in the Gold Coast hinterland, involving the deaths of two platypus.
- (2) Amendments have been made to the *Fisheries Regulation 2008* to limit the use of opera house traps in Queensland's freshwaters.

From 1 February 2015, the use of funnel and round traps, which include opera house traps, with an opening size between five and 10 centimetres, will only be allowed in waters west of the Great Dividing Range and the Gore Highway and 44 listed impoundments.

These changes will bring Queensland into line with fishing requirements in other eastern Australian states and will remove these traps from waterways where platypus are most likely to be encountered.

Additionally, to prevent these traps being lost by fishers and ghost fishing, the new regulations prescribe the mandatory use of solid floats. This is intended to reduce the number of traps lost because of damage to other types of floats such as milk bottles.

Other changes to recreational fishing rules in freshwater have been made to further reduce the impact on non-target species, including banning the use of set lines in freshwaters and requiring fishers to be within 50 metres of their fishing lines at all times.

There are animal welfare and sustainability issues from using fishing lines in this way because they have the potential to impact both fish and other animals. The low cost of fishing lines means fishers sometimes abandon their gear leaving the lines in the water which continue to fish.

I am confident that these changes will reduce the impact of recreational fishing equipment on non-target species such as platypus.