

## Queensland trawl fishers embrace new technology to reduce bycatch

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Australia, Queensland's Department of Agriculture and Fisheries has embarked on a collaborative project aimed at helping trawl fishers minimise accidental catch of protected species such as sea snakes, sharks and rays.

To support sustainable fishing practices and protect vulnerable marine species, a trial of Bycatch Reduction Devices (BRDs) will be rolled out over the next 18 months.

Researchers will collaborate with interested fishers to deploy and evaluate the effectiveness of BRDs at sea. This collaborative effort is made possible through the support of the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment, and Water, and the Australian Council of Prawn Fisheries.

This initiative builds on a suite of other fishing regulations that ensure the fishery is sustainable. DAF research scientist Matthew Campbell highlighted the success of previous trials involving these innovative devices.

"The Tom's Fisheye, for example, has been demonstrated to reduce the capture of sea snakes during sea trials conducted in the Torres Strait Prawn Fishery. Preliminary trials in Queensland indicate that the Tom's Fisheye reduces the catch of sea snakes by 64%. Queensland trawl fishers and netmakers can participate in the project by developing devices that reduce the catch of sea snakes and sharks and rays for at-sea testing. After the testing period, observers will join participating vessels to collect relevant data under commercial conditions providing empirical evidence of the devices' effectiveness. The observer trips are designed to demonstrate the devices reduce the catch of sea snakes or sharks and rays, while maintaining target

species catch rates." he said.