

Blacks studies school subject

17mar06

THE Tasmanian Greens released their Aboriginal affairs policy yesterday, saying Aboriginal studies would become a core subject in schools.

The Greens would also review barriers preventing Aborigines from legally pursuing cultural hunting and gathering and there would be a buy-back of abalone and crayfish quotas to in turn allow catches by Aboriginal communities.

The policy also returns more land of spiritual, cultural, historic and economic significance.

A dedicated unit in the Department of Premier and Cabinet would be maintained to ensure social justice principles were used by government departments in policy formulation and provision of services.

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Herald Sun

Five charged over abalone harvest

16mar06

FIVE men have been charged over the seizure of more than 100 illegally harvested abalone on the NSW south coast.

Police chased two men when they came out of the water at Black Head, near Gerroa, allegedly carrying 101 of the valuable shellfish. They were arrested shortly after.

Three other men allegedly carrying diving gear were then arrested in the car park.




A 27-year-old Nowra man, 24-year-old Kemblawarra man, 28-year-old Warilla man, 34-year-old Barrack Heights man and 27-year-old Albion Park man were taken to Wollongong police station for questioning.

They were charged with possessing prohibited size fish, possessing undersize fish and taking fish during closure.

The Albion Park man was also charged with breach of bail and was refused bail to appear in Wollongong Local Court today.

The other four men were bailed to appear in Kiama Local Court on April 19.

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**Australia. 13-FISH reporting line
hooks illegal fishermen; two years
jail for poacher**   

Sunday, 19 March 2006

Legislation news:

Reports from members of the community to the 13-FISH (13 3474) reporting line are having a major impact on illegal fishing in Victorian waters, the Minister Responsible for Fisheries, Bob Cameron has announced.

Mr Cameron said Victoria's Northern Region - which runs along the Murray River - and the Port Phillip region were the biggest hotspots for illegal activity.

Latest figures show that since its launch in September 2003, more than 3000 calls have been received by the hotline. As a direct result of these calls more than 180 infringement notices have been issued and at least 30 prosecutions have been successfully achieved.

Of a total number of reports, 618 related directly to suspected illegal fishing activities involving abalone and 569 to suspected illegal activity involving other marine fisheries.

Mr Cameron said significant information related to illegal fishing activity had also been recorded in other regions. Helpful information to record for the hotline includes registration numbers, descriptions of people involved and the type, time, date and location of the observed activity, with all information able to be kept confidential.

The 13 FISH (13 3474) service has been supported by regular fishing enforcement operations at peak times and reinforced by tough new fisheries legislation introduced by the Government in 2004.

A Melbourne man who pleaded guilty to taking 30 kg of abalone from Waratah Bay has been sentenced to two years jail for abalone poaching. The man, who had eight prior convictions dating back to 1989 relating to abalone theft, had a

three-month suspended sentence for perjury re-imposed. He will be in jail for a minimum of 13 months.

He was the first Victorian to be tried and jailed in the County Court under new laws making poaching an indictable offence. His dive gear was forfeited and the motor vehicle being used at the time of the offence is still subject to forfeiture.

Indictable offences in the Fisheries Act came into force in April 2004, and offenders now face large fines and up to 10 years jail when caught.

Last Updated (Sunday, 19 March 2006)



Weapons haul leads to imported turtles

Sunday, 19 March 2006

Customs & Excise news:

Customs has seized a cache of illegal weapons and located turtles allegedly imported from the US in contravention of wildlife laws in a cross-border operation involving officers from both NSW and Victoria. The investigation began when Customs officers in Sydney intercepted an air cargo consignment destined for a Melbourne address last month. The package contained butterfly knives, slingshots with arm braces and a flick knife. All items are prohibited imports, if imported to Australia without a permit.

Customs officers yesterday searched a home in Pascoe Vale, Melbourne, with the assistance of Victoria Police and the Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment. They allegedly found a crossbow and three red-eared slider turtles. The turtles are native to the south-eastern region of the United States. A 37-year-old man has been interviewed by Customs in relation to the imported weapons and inquiries are continuing. The

maximum penalty for importing non-firearm weapons is \$275,000 and/or 10 years imprisonment.

Customs Victorian Regional Director, Jaclyne Fisher said Customs views seriously the importation of prohibited weapons without prior permission. In addition, Ms Fisher said Australia had some of the strictest wildlife protection laws in the world. "This operation is a credit to the skills of our Customs investigation team and the co-operation between Customs and state wildlife protection agencies," Ms Fisher said.

Last Updated (Sunday, 19 March 2006)

Study to focus on abalone habitat

Monday, 17/04/2006

A study on abalone habitat is about to get under way in south-west Victoria.

The information collected will be used to ensure the industry is managed sustainably.

Harry Peeters, from the Western Abalone Divers Association, says aerial imagery, sonar devices and underwater video will be used to help scientifically describe the seabed.

"Australia has one of the last sustainable wild catch abalone industries in the world," he said.

"Most of the others have been fished to extinction.

"Victoria is the second largest producing state in Australia, behind Tasmania, and produces in excess of \$60 million each year to Victoria's revenues

Tasmania, and produces in excess of \$60 million each year to Victoria's revenues

The Advertiser

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Exporter may leave airport in the cold

By CRAIG BILDSTIEN

18apr06

AN Adelaide seafood exporter is threatening to abandon the city's new \$260 million airport terminal because of inadequate cold storage for its highly-perishable produce.

Dover Fisheries is being forced to leave frozen abalone worth \$140 per kg sitting in boxes on the tarmac for up to three hours without refrigeration.

While dry ice is added to the boxes before they leave its Royal Park factory, the company says it "melts" rapidly and at least one shipment bound for Hong Kong was spoiled on arrival.

Director Chris Madsen - vice-president of the International Trade Association of SA - says Dover is "seriously considering" air freighting from Melbourne rather than risk ongoing losses.

Dover exports about 20 tonnes of frozen abalone annually worth almost \$3 million. The issue is top of the agenda for the next meeting of the State Government's newly-constituted Export Council on Thursday.

Council chairman Malcolm May said yesterday it was "critical" that infrastructure be improved if SA was to maintain a strong export focus.

In the past, Dover and other exporters have been able to deliver frozen abalone the night before an international flight, where it was stored in a freezer at minus 18C.

SA Freight Council general-manager Neil Murphy said yesterday a succession of operators, four in seven years, had found the freezer was not viable and it had not re-opened since Scott's Transport exited the facility this year.

He said negotiations were ongoing and he was confident of a positive outcome in the medium term.

MAGNET

<http://eden.yourguide.com.au/home.asp>

Bell tolls for abalone Thursday, 13 April 2006

The death knell has been sounding for the NSW abalone industry in sporadic chimes for the past 6 or 7 years.

However it appears now that the gallows have been built, with the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) announcing this



- Mick Johnson processes a delivery of abalone at Southern Ocean Seafoods in Eden yesterday. However the NSW abalone industry may never recover from the latest decision by the Department of Primary Industries to pursue unpaid management levies applied during years of massive quota reductions.

week that operators must pay the more than \$800,000 in management levies owed, or begin forfeiting their quota units.

The NSW abalone industry has been rocked in recent times with huge reductions in the total allowable catch (TAC), from 333 tons state wide in 2000 to 130t today.

The most recent cut, from 206t to the current level, a 38 per cent reduction, was announced on June 30 last year, one day before it came into effect on July 1.

Duncan Worthington, a scientist with NSW Fisheries for 13 years who now works as an advisor for the local industry, said that the government gave the impression in a series of meetings that the overdue Fisheries management levies would be waived, to help operators absorb the huge quota cuts.

"Yes, they were willing to say that to us behind closed doors, but it was impossible to get that guarantee in public," Mr Worthington said.

What operators are now faced with is the payment of two years worth of management levies in 15 months, for 05/06 and 06/07, not to mention their share of the overdue levies which will be up to \$140,000 for some operators.

"The feeling is very much that DPI have bankrupted the abalone industry - very simply, there will not be many operators who can pay what they are demanding.

"At the last budget meeting with DPI in May last year, industry said it would not be able to pay the levies with a TAC of 206t - so they have further reduced that to 130t and have demanded the same levies be paid."

Local shareholder Dennis Luobikis is a member of the five person Abalone Management Advisory Committee (ABMAC), the peak industry body in the state.

His prediction of the effect of DPI's decision to pursue backdated fees is far more brutal.

"There is no doubt that the Minister (for DPI Ian McDonald) has made an informed decision to bankrupt the industry," Mr Luobikis said.

"We have kept him and his department very informed as to the desperate state the industry is in at present, as a result of the quota cuts he has presided over.

"We had been told unofficially that the overdue fees would be waived, and even then we were all bordering on going under because of the quota cuts.

"But since last year we have had no consultation, no meetings, and this announcement has come out of the blue.

"What makes it particularly hard to swallow is they are charging management fees without providing management - it is common knowledge that the abalone resource in NSW is the most mismanaged of all primary products in the country, and we have to pay for that privilege."

Mr Luobikis said that he was now better off committing civil disobedience by continuing to harvest abalone but not pay the government, so he would have enough money to pay what he owes to the bank.

"And I know that I am better off than a lot of blokes in the state, so I can only imagine what it will do to them," he said.

"This government is morally and financially bankrupt, and they are now just trying to get as much money for the industry before it is totally dead and drained."

The much-anticipated Keniry Review into the future of the abalone industry recommended that the current fee structure was unsustainable, however since being presented to the minister has disappeared from any government agenda.

Its predecessor, the Palmer review into the black market for abalone, had similar high hopes, but after many months of industry consultation and expert advice has had zero effect on industry legislation.



Museum presents aquatic adventure

Curious visitors will get a hands-on experience with sea stars, gentle swell sharks, crabs, sea urchins, sea cucumbers, snails, and abalone at "Museum Gone Wet & Wild: Awesome Aquatic Adventures," from noon to 3 p.m. Sat., April 8 at the Ventura County Museum of History & Art, 100 E. Main St., Ventura.

Marine biologists and UCSB students will use an interactive approach to introduce these creatures and show their importance to mankind.

The event is free with museum admission (\$4 adults, \$3 seniors, \$1 children; members and children 5 and under free). For information, please call (805) 653-0323, ext. 10, or visit www.venturamuseum.org.

Herald Sun

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Gangs loot coast

Danny Buttler

07apr06

Organised crime destroying our sea

ORGANISED crime gangs are plundering Australia's coastline, poaching priceless fish stocks and threatening catastrophic environmental damage.

Despite recent seizures of illegal fishing boats in Australian waters, a Herald Sun investigation has found thousands of illegal boats are entering Australian water each year.

Evidence is also growing that authorities are powerless to stop the black-market trade in which:

INDONESIAN fishermen have little fear of capture as they strip Australian reefs of sharks and fish.

OUTLAW motorcycle gangs trade Victorian abalone in exchange for guns and drugs.

CUSTOMS patrols capture only a fraction of the boats that enter Australian waters to illegally fish.

Federal Customs Minister Chris Ellison has admitted the recent seizure of 23 suspected poaching vessels in northern Australia had confirmed suspicions criminal syndicates were behind the black market.

"What it has demonstrated is the increased organisation of illegal fishing," he said.

"Two were Chinese trawlers of 35m in length, that's very different to the traditional Indonesian fishing boats we've dealt with in the past."

Senator Ellison said the Government would look to toughen its border security and penalties for poachers. But Opposition Customs spokesman Joe Ludwig said a separate Coast Guard service should have been created when the problem began growing dramatically in 2001.

Senator Ludwig said last year's 13,000 aerial sightings of unidentified vessels showed Australian borders were leaking like a sieve.

"It is now too late in the piece. If they started in 2001 . . . and put in place a single border protection agency, you would then have a deterrent effect," Senator Ludwig said.

With as few as four Customs vessels patrolling between Cairns and Broome at any one time, the impact of illegal fishing is already having a devastating effect.

Shark fishing to feed Asia's insatiable desire for shark-fin soup has seen stocks of the ocean's peak predators drop dramatically.

Charles Darwin University researcher Corey Bradshaw said the northern Australian shark populations might already be in desperate trouble.

"The anecdotal evidence is enough at the moment to be raising a lot of eyebrows," Dr Bradshaw said.

Commander of the Australian Customs Service vessel Corio Bay, Brian Marien, said the poachers might only stop once they had devastated the most valuable species.

"One thing that will eventually stop them coming down here is when the fish stock is gone and that's a real scenario with the Patagonian toothfish," he said.

"If we don't deter them or don't reduce their rate of effort, eventually the breeding stock will go."

Mr Marien said Australia's vast coastline and the limited number of vessels meant illegal fisherman could use weight of numbers to avoid arrest.

"Sometimes they will be seen by the aircraft well inside the Australian fishing zone and they don't move," he said.

"They know that we probably haven't got the assets to respond to every single successful sighting."

Asian crime gangs are also involved in Victoria's lucrative abalone industry. It is believed the black market in the prohibitively expensive mollusc may involve outlaw motorcycle gangs, which trade abalone for guns and drugs.

An Australian Institute of Criminology Report pointed to links between the heroin and handgun trade and illegal abalone sales, which threaten Australia's \$300 million-a-year legitimate industry.

Chris Egan, who manages abalone processor Moyston Fisheries, said Asian organised crime syndicates were behind the black market. "The divers see the poachers out there and the poachers basically thumb their noses at them," he said.

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Eyris Blue Pearls

Posted Mar 31st 2006 12:04PM by [Deidre Woollard](#)

Filed under: [Jewelry](#)

Last year, when the news of the [rare quahog pearl](#) made the rounds it opened my eyes to the fact that the oyster isn't the only underwater creature with an opalescent secret. Now the abalone may be the next big pearl producer. The New Zealand Paua abalone produces blue pearls. Abalone shell pieces have often appeared in inexpensive jewelry but these are a little more upscale. They are hemispheric pearls and are graded for size, shape, luster and surface and color. Each



[Eyris Blue Pearl](#) comes with a certificate of authenticity. The Eyris Blue Pearl Company runs five sea-based blue pearl farms in the waters around New Zealand. The Blue Pearls will have their big debut in the U.S. at the JCK Show this summer. Susanna from [The Bling Blog](#) thinks they will make a big splash here and that we will see them incorporated into new designs from high-end jewelers before long. I'm not quite so certain but I have a feeling these are probably much more beautiful in person than they are in photographs

THE STANDARD

Senior Sergeant Margetts has a sea change

By MATT NEAL
March 29, 2006



CHANGE OF SCENERY: Warrnambool's new police Senior Sergeant Paul Margetts settles in to his latest role.
Picture: GLEN WATSON

WARRNAMBOOL'S newest senior sergeant traded the bushfire-ravaged Grampians for his first coastal posting.

Senior Sergeant Paul Margetts spent the past 12 months filling in wherever he was needed around the state, from Koondrook on the Murray to Halls Gap and Ararat. In January he was in the hot seat, heading up the police operations centre while devastating bushfires tore through the Grampians National Park and surrounding region.

Senior Sergeant Margetts said he had a relatively easy job because he was away from the front of the fire.

“But we had 80 people out there working for us and the welfare of those people was paramount,” he said.

“My interest is in emergency management and I've been involved in a lot of previous projects to do with search-and-rescue in the Grampians.”

Senior Sergeant Margetts said he was interested in the new challenges which working on the coast for the first time would present, such as sea search-and-rescue operations and marine crime such as abalone poaching.

The coastal posting will also allow him to indulge his passion for fishing.

The keen angler said he was pleased to learn the Warrnambool police station had its


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Cham Islands promote swallows' nests

(09-04-2006)

Tourists will now have the chance to taste swallows' nest, a rare and expensive delicacy, when they visit Hoi An's Cham Islands thanks to a new promotion by the tourism board that makes this special treat more affordable. **Ngoc Tuan** reports.

Visitors to the Cham Islands in Hoi An Township these days have a rare opportunity to taste swallows' nest, a delicacy the region has exported for at least three centuries.

Swallows' nest has suddenly become more affordable for tourists on a tight budget, since the Hoi An Tourism Board started promoting tours to To Vo Cavern on Lao Island, one of the seven islets in the Cham group.

The islands, part of Hoi An Town's Tan Hiep Commune, lie some 15km offshore and have a population of 3,000.

Beginning April 7, island residents will celebrate the death anniversary of Ho Van Hoa, who was appointed as chief nest collector for the crown by Emperor Gia Long in 1806.

Vo Phung, director of the Hoi An Culture and Sports Centre, said that in addition to the usual sightseeing and diving tours, tourists could now visit To Vo Cavern to observe the delicate process of extracting swallows' nests.

According to Ho Hoi, a 59-year-old nest collector from Thanh Chau Village, swallows flock to caves on Lao, Kho and Tai islands to build their nests in December. Their nests are collected twice a year, once in April and the second time in mid-June.

Hoi said it was very difficult to reach the birds' nests, which are built inside sea caves on vertical cliffs. To reach them, collectors have to construct bamboo scaffolds up to 20m high.



Nest egg: Tourists visit Yen (Swallow) Island. — VNA/VNS Photo Anh Tuan



Valuable: A collector extracts swallows' nest from a cavern roof.



Like gold: Semi-processed swallows' nest. — VNS Photos Le Viet Hai

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Once they determine that the nests are old enough to collect, they spray the nest with water in order to soften the material and make it easier to remove.

"It's a very dangerous craft," said Hoi. "A number of collectors have lost their lives in these caves."

Phung said that the town harvested between 1 to 1.5 tonnes of swallows' nests per year, which sold for US\$3,000 to \$4,000 per kilo. This resource, he said, had brought in millions of dollars per year and earned Hoi An a reputation for a high-quality product throughout Southeast Asia.

During the promotional week, swallows' nest stewed with lotus seeds will be offered for just VND100,000 (\$6) per bowl. Diners can also taste swallows' egg wine, a kind of rice alcohol fermented with eggs and precious sea creatures like abalone and sea cucumber. Mid-range swallows' nest can be purchased for VND4.8 million (\$300) per 100 grams.

Swallows' nest has been traditionally cooked in two ways. The sweet version is stewed with refined sugar while the salty version is boiled with young chickens. Phung said the soups were believed to cure a number of diseases, like tuberculosis and asthma.

He also stressed that the tours would not put a strain on the birds' habitat, because tourists would not be permitted in the caves while the birds were building their nests. Instead, he said, tours would be of the "look-but-don't-touch" variety, permitting visitors to watch the extraction process from the safety of a boat. — VNS

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Copyright by Viet Nam News, Vietnam News Agency

11 Tran Hung Dao Street, Hanoi, Vietnam

Editor in Chief: Tran Mai Huong

Tel. 84-4-9332316; Fax: 84-4-9332311

E-mail: vnnews@vnagency.com.vn

Publication Permit: 599/GP-INTER

Granted by the Ministry of Culture and Information on April 9, 1998.