Hard questions needed on dolphin redress

The Ministry for Primary Industries is beginning to reveal the extent of the ex-gratia payments to be made to fishers and licensed fish receivers affected by the decisions around the Hector’s and Maui Dolphin Threat Management Plan.

Ex-gratia of course means ‘by favour’. In other words, the government claim they have no legal obligation to pay people whose livelihoods are impacted but they will make one-off payments to some of those affected.

Earlier this week MPI rang those who would be receiving a payment and left those who were not anxiously staring at their phones until an email landed in their inbox confirming their worst fears. Their fishing grounds had been taken away and, just like that, so had everything they had worked for.

The industry has many questions around the science MPI used to support the decisions and some more immediate questions around the fairness and methodology that brought the government to this model of recompense.

Last week in this forum we brought up the issue of Treaty rights and how iwi have been left out in the cold because they have no compensation for the quota they received as part of the Maori Fisheries Settlement. They now hold quota, in some cases, for a fishery that will no longer exist. The government needs to look long and hard at how this will play out – both from a trust perspective and a Constitutional perspective. This is a matter that is of utmost importance and to be ignored at the government’s peril.

Something that also needs an urgent response from the government is why, when the Minister himself said that the impact of this decision on the industry would be between $30
and $70 million the ex gratia payments seem to have little relativity to the financial hit the fishers are taking.

From our calculations, the pay outs will total less than $5 million, put many out of work and cause deep financial stress for many others.

The assistance is to support transitioning to an alternative method of fishing.

Longlining has been suggested but that is not as easy as it may seem on the surface. You can’t longline for butterfish, a herbivorous fish, and you can’t longline profitably for lower-value fish. The costs of longlining are roughly four times the cost of set netting to catch the same fish. The ex-gratia payment does not address that.

Questions should also be asked about expectations of a fisher who fished for 30 years with a set net to acquire the resources, skills and experience to start fishing with longlines. Many fishers who will have to tie up vessels, lay off crew and give up set netting are to receive no assistance other than business advice to the value of $5,000.

Some ex gratia payments are less than $10,000 and that won’t enable the fisher to transition to another form of fishing or exit fishing.

And, as previously mentioned, one of the biggest questions is why quota holders are to be left holding quota with no value.

Compare the situation with land and livelihoods taken away by the Public Works Act, where property owners and affected parties receive fair market value and solatium for their loss. That’s a long way from an ex-gratia payment of less than $10,000.

A handful will receive more than that, but many will receive nothing.

Engagement with industry over the issues raised here and how they should reflect the level of payments to our people would have been welcomed.

Hopefully, it is not too late to address the situation.

---

**Fishing duo land Northland's biggest boat build in 80 years**

Fishing brothers, Adam and Nat Davey, have embarked on what will be one of the Far North’s biggest boat builds in nearly 80 years.

The $4.5 million bottom longline vessel is currently being constructed at an Ōpua boatyard by Bluefix Boatworks. Ten extra staff have been employed to complete the boat in time for the next fishing season.

The duo, who operate under the name Medea Fishing Co., have worked in the industry since leaving school and currently own two commercial fishing vessels, *Medea* and *Florence Nightingale*. 
For 20 years, the brothers have employed local youth, paid for completion of Deckhand certificates and Skipper's tickets and have been active contributors to the Far North Police's Youth at Risk programme.

Creating local opportunities has always been a core part of their operation, so expansion of the fleet seemed a logical move for the business and for supporting the local economy.

Their latest 72-foot addition, FV Manakai – Hawaiian for 'spirit of the ocean', will carry five crew fishing for bluenose, bass, hapuku, tarakihi and southern bluefin tuna.

Made from triple-skin plywood with fibreglass inside and out, the vessel's hull is effectively a composite that will outlast any steel or aluminum counterpart.

Two five-cylinder Scania engines will power the vessel, delivering 300hp with speeds of up to 12 knots and a 20,000 litre fuel capacity.

Installation of a 27kVA generator, water-maker and icemaker will also churn out up to three tonnes of ice per day, keeping the catch at its best.

"As fishermen, we never thought we'd build our own boat," Adam said.

"To build something this big is pretty amazing. It's a legacy. I hope someday my son will be running it."

The entire project is expected to take 16 months.
Adam (left) and Nat Davey’s new bottom longline vessel *Manakai* is expected to take 16 months to complete.

---

**Seafood Stars Awards**

The nomination deadline for the 2020 Seafood Stars Awards has been extended to Tuesday, 7 July.

Although the 2020 conference has been cancelled, the awards will continue, with winners announced through the Seafood magazine.

The awards are a great opportunity to celebrate our industry people and recognise their achievements.

This year’s award categories include:

- Future Development and Innovation Award
- Young Achiever Award
- Longstanding Service Award
- COVID-19 Response Award

Download and submit the [form](#) to nominate someone today.

For more information, visit the [Seafood New Zealand website](#) or contact us at [info@seafood.org.nz](mailto:info@seafood.org.nz) with any questions you may have.

Submissions now close Tuesday, 7 July 2020.

---

**2020 Sustainable Business Awards**

The Sustainable Business Awards are New Zealand’s longest-running and pre-eminent sustainability awards. Now in their 18th year, they recognise businesses, local government, social enterprises and individuals succeeding in sustainability.

The Awards provide the chance to compete in 12 categories relating to sustainable business, including new categories for covid-19 resilience, climate action and technology:

- Sustainability Superstar
- Communicating for Impact
- Climate Action Leader
- Climate Action Innovator
- Social Impactor
- Outstanding Collaboration
- Going Circular
- Tech for Good
- Good Food
The Supreme Award will be awarded to a business for outstanding performance in all aspects of sustainability.

All New Zealand organisations and individuals may participate.

For more information or to make an entry, visit: [www.sustainable.org.nz/awards](http://www.sustainable.org.nz/awards)

Entries close 28 July 2020.

---

**News**

Figures from Statistics NZ show Maori authorities exported $741 million worth of commodities in the 2019 year – up $46 million (7 percent) from 2018. The new figure marks a record value in the last 10 years. “Māori have a long history of overseas trade, going back as early as the 1820s,” business statistics senior manager Peter Dolan said. Kaimoana, including fish, crayfish and mussels, were the top exports for Māori authorities in 2019 at $365 million, making up almost half the value of their total exports. Twenty percent of all New Zealand’s fish, crustacean, and mollusc exports were also exported by Māori authorities, with seafood being its top export commodity. China remained the top export market in 2019, accounting for $354 million of commodities, almost half of the group’s exports. “China has been one of New Zealand’s largest export markets over the past 10 years,” Dolan said. “They accounted for more than one-third of New Zealand’s kaimoana exports in 2019.”

The Commissioner of Inland Revenue dropped action against eight Hawke’s Bay-based fishing companies at Wellington’s High Court this week, Stuff reported. The lawyer for the companies, Dean Russ, said the eight companies had settled their core tax, interest and
penalty debts. The remaining company, Hawke’s Bay Seafoods, had not operated as a fishing company for over 18 months, and did not trade, but it held the maritime operator’s certificate for the group’s fishing fleet. If it was liquidated it would halt fishing operations until that was resolved, Russ said. He laid the blame for the company’s current position at the feet of previous management. The coronavirus lockdown was also a major contributor to a failure to get the tax matters resolved. He believed the total debt to be $1.58 million, but Inland Revenue’s lawyer, Alarna Sharratt, said it was more than $1.7m, with a higher portion in core debt than Russ suggested. Previous proposals to settle the debt had been declined. PAYE had also not been paid. Russ said an agreement was being finalised to sell some annual catch entitlement to Takitimu Seafoods for $1.2m, and other quota parcels could be sold. The group had a new accountant who was rationalising about 35 companies in the group. Associate Judge Kenneth Johnson has given Hawke’s Bay Seafoods until August 4 to pay the tax bill.

CONTACT

Email info@seafood.org.nz
Phone +64 4 385 4005

Physical address
Level 6
Eagle Technology House
135 Victoria Street
Wellington 6011
New Zealand

Check out the latest Seafood Magazines