

**In brief...****Show will boost Asian boating**

Boat Thai 2007 is said to be the first boat show to be held in Bangkok, Thailand and targeting the entire Indo China region.

The show will take place from April 27 to 29 and feature boat displays, luxury yachts, charter services, the latest equipment and technology, and other marine services and products. It is designed to complement the Boat Asia show and grow the boating industry in Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines. Boat Thai 2007 will also feature new interactive elements, including the "Book a boat viewing" on-line system used in Boat Asia in 2006.

**Sharks slaughtered for soup**

Up to four times more sharks than previously thought are being slaughtered to fill the increasing demand for shark fin soup. Each year between 26 million and 73 million sharks, weighing up to 2.3 million tonnes, are killed so their fins can be used for shark fin soup, which costs US\$100 a bowl in Chinese restaurants. Figures reported to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation put the number at 0.4 to 0.6 million tonnes a year.



"Our findings confirm that a far larger number of sharks are being caught every year than current databases indicate. The fin trade is continuing to expand and thus the pressure on shark populations is constantly increasing," said Dr Shelley Clarke of the Imperial College London.

The species most at risk are blue sharks, hammerheads and silky sharks. Many are caught by unregulated fisheries that do not report the catch. The World Conservation Union says 65 out of 373 known shark species are threatened, largely because of the trade in shark fins. Several countries have banned the slaughter of sharks for their fins following public outcries.

**Scientists study snapper hotspots**

MARINE SCIENTISTS ARE studying hotspots known as "sinks" to try to understand why they are so popular with oceanic life and help build snapper stocks.

The scientists from the National Institute for Water and Economic Research spent nine days in early November tagging 4000 snapper from two commercial longliners in the inner Hauraki Gulf. "As snapper are caught, their numbers are replenished by snapper moving in to 'replace' them from surrounding source areas," says scientist Mark Morrison, who is leading the study.

He suspects the reasons why the sink areas are so popular are a combination of snapper preferences for more complex seafloor structures such as shells, rocks, sponges and worm-tubes. The data will also help scientists learn how to protect the sinks, especially from sedimentation. The tagging is being supplemented by night video surveys, aerial boat counts and boat-ramp surveys.

Fishers who return the tags go into a year-long monthly draw for two prizes of rod and reel sets worth \$350 each. Niwa's telephone number is on each



tag. Anglers reporting a tagged fish will be asked to provide details of where and when it was caught, including whether it was over sand or reef, its length, and GPS coordinates of the catch site if possible. The information will be used to form a picture of snapper movements in the gulf to show what makes the population tick.

**CHURN BLAMED FOR FERRY CRASHES**

A HIGH TURNOVER of executives, and front-line workers who thought Sydney Ferries could run itself, contributed to a string of collisions involving Manly's ferries last year, says the Office of Transport Safety Investigations.

Human error was behind six of 11 collisions involving the Freshwater-class ferries over 12 months, including several crashes into wharves. The report, published on October 30, says organisational problems, such as inadequate maintenance and training and poor communication, led to many of the factors behind the collisions.

The assistant Minister for Transport, Eric Roozendaal, said the number of crashes was unacceptable, but Sydney Ferries had taken big steps towards improving safety and training.

However, the report said, "Despite a number of reviews and reports, Sydney Ferries has experienced difficulty in implementing a comprehensive programme of safety remediation."

Investigators found that high turnover in senior management had hampered the management of daily operations and the ability to bring about change in the organisation. Sydney Ferries had had 11 chief executives in 15 years, four operations general managers in two years, six engineering general managers in six years and three chief finance officers in a year.

The present Chief Executive, Rear Admiral Geoff Smith, is the third this year. The report says eight unions looked after 600 employees. Unions said any suggestion that membership affected safety measures was offensive.

Employees, many of them third-generation, were generally attached to the status quo and had "a firmly held opinion" that the company could run itself. This opinion has been reinforced by the continual change of senior managers. "It manifests itself in a lack of regard for formal procedures and has complicated the management of change." Maintenance was "sub-optimal", and crew resource management was below best practice.