



Grant helps commercialise bird-friendly fishing hook



Hans Jusseit was a finalist in the ABC TV *New Inventors* program. His next step is to mass produce the Smart Hook. (page 1 photos courtesy of the *New Inventors*)

Former tuna fisherman and industry chief executive Hans Jusseit has invented a way to prevent seabirds and turtles from being hooked by tuna fishermen.

“With more than two billion hooks being set a year, I really wanted to see a solution to the devastating impact that the fishing industry is having on seabirds and turtles,” Hans said.

“I suggest 700,000 to 800,000 seabirds and more than 250,000 turtles could be saved a year.”

His solution is the Smart Hook. The baited hook is protected by a shield, and is held in place with a biodegradable pin.

The pin dissolves once the hook is below the feeding depth of seabirds (25 metres) and turtles

(100 metres). Once the pin dissolves, the shield is released and the baited hook is ready for fishing.

The shield and the pin are both made of a metal alloy which dissolves, leaving no contaminants.

The Smart Hook was a grand finalist in the 2008 ABC TV *New Inventors* program. Hans’ next steps are to attract investors to mass produce the Smart Hook and continue with collaborative working partnerships with government, industry and conservation groups.



Hans worked as a tuna fishing boat owner/operator for 10 years, and a fishing industry representative in Australia and overseas for 20 years. Those business skills encouraged him to dive head-first into the Smart Hook invention.

\$120,000 from *Commercialising Emerging Technologies (COMET)*.

The Smart Hook idea came to him one day when he had some free time after attending a workshop on turtles in Hawaii.

“I had some time to look at the issues outside the box, and I realised that all the talk was about distracting the turtles from the bait.

“These ideas were just bandaid measures.

“I knew that the answer to the problem had to be simple – we just needed to prevent them from being hooked in the first place.”

Importantly for his invention, he also worked as a scientific instrument maker.

Hans’ keen interest in the marine environment stems from both his work for the University of Queensland on a Heron Island marine research station, as well as from his time as a commercial fisherman.

Hans said it took a \$120,000 Commercialising Emerging Technologies (COMET) grant from AusIndustry to help him turn his working prototype into a product ready for full-scale manufacture.

“Without the assistance of *COMET* funding, this project would not have seen the light of day,” Hans said.

He said it would have been extremely difficult to attract investors.



“We’ve produced something that the industry has been crying out for – we’ve found the solution to a devastating global problem.”
Hans Jusseit

“We’ve produced something that the industry has been crying out for – we’ve found the solution to a devastating global problem.”

Hans made his grant work for him. The grant helped with patents and paid for market research.

COMET provides a business adviser to help identify priorities. The adviser helped Hans develop a business plan, focus on management skills and develop an intellectual property strategy.

Hans said the business plan was proving useful when approaching banks and potential investors.

“The management skills have also helped me when I’m approaching other businesses for collaborative work.

“It gives these businesses confidence that I have set up my business in a well-documented, structured way,” Hans said.

Hans said the business adviser had given him “phenomenal advice” about his intellectual property strategy.

“He helped me work out the most cost-effective way of lodging patents.

“Without this advice, it would have been a very tough road. The business adviser saved me a lot of money,” Hans said.

The grant also helped him commission market research which helped inform his business plan and intellectual property strategy.



Commercialising Emerging Technologies

COMET is a competitive grants program that helps early-stage growth companies, spin-off companies and individuals commercialise their innovations.

COMET provides access to private sector business advisers and tailored services to help improve management skills and attract capital and partners.

It offers grants of between \$5000 and \$120,000 to successful applicants. Projects are supported for up to two years.

AusIndustry is the Australian Government’s principal business program delivery division in the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

AusIndustry delivers more than 30 products, worth about \$2 billion a year, to more than 10,000 large and small businesses and 100,000 individuals.

AusIndustry products include innovation grants, tax and duty concessions, support for industry competitiveness, venture capital, tourism grants and small business skills development programs.

Visit www.ausindustry.gov.au, call 13 28 46 or email hotline@ausindustry.gov.au for more information.