



Speech by

Hon. PETER BEATTIE

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Fisheries (East Coast Trawl) Management Plan

Hon. P. D. BEATTIE (Brisbane Central— ALP) (Premier) (9.44 a.m.), by leave: Yesterday in the Senate the Federal Environment Minister threatened to intervene in the management of Queensland's trawl fishery in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. Senator Hill did this apparently as a follow-up to his politically inspired claim that Queensland has failed to properly manage this fishery. Nothing could be further from the truth. Let us examine the facts.

Queensland spent several years consulting and then drafting the Fisheries (East Coast Trawl) Management Plan. Few stakeholders failed to have their say. However, at the eleventh hour, Senator Hill, through the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, raised the stakes and demanded substantial cutbacks to the trawl effort. In an attempt to accommodate this request, I brought together my key Ministers and all of the stakeholders and found, much to my dismay, substantial disenchantment in the industry in respect of the sorts of extreme changes that Senator Hill was seeking. What Senator Hill had planned would have seen a substantial number of small family-owned businesses being forced from the industry and replaced by larger corporations better equipped and resourced to handle the changes. That would happen at every one of our major provincial cities. Family operators would have gone broke. Small businesspeople would have gone broke under Senator Hill's plan. This was obviously a time for consultation, which is why we acted.

I chose to send the more important elements of the plan to a working group under the control of my department. That group is to report back by 1 March 2000 on alternative ways to achieve the outcomes that Senator Hill seeks. I gave this group specific instructions, as did the Ministers, to focus on the means and time frames required to achieve the following: the necessary reductions in catch effort, the availability and need for by-catch reduction and turtle exclusion devices in certain fisheries; the species that should be targeted by these fisheries and those that should remain as by-catch. Having done this, my Ministers and I were still able to put the bulk of the original trawl management plan through Cabinet and Executive Council and into law.

A Government member interjected.

Mr BEATTIE: That is right; it is the first time this has ever been done.

This achieved the necessary closures required in the fishery to protect the resource. The first of these closures, in the northern region, will commence on 15 December and run for an initial period of three months, which will allow restocking, spawning and so on. Senator Hill's suggestion that this action is in some way an abrogation of my duty is a nonsense and is simply untrue. What my Government and I have achieved is a means to reach the same end point that Senator Hill desires while bringing the industry with me. This will result in an orderly transition to the new regime. What Senator Hill had proposed was a traumatic change to the industry with little consultation and no compensation for those participants who would be unduly disadvantaged. It was political arrogance of the worst extreme. Probably the most confusing of Senator Hill's claims in the Senate yesterday is his claim that we have in some way abandoned his proposed start-up date. My records show clearly that his commencement date for catch effort reduction was 1 January 2001. If as expected my working group reports by 1 March and can resolve this issue in an amicable fashion, I can see no reason why the 1 January 2001 start-up date cannot be met.

In short, my Government has put through the bulk of the trawl management plan that Senator Hill insisted on and wanted, and I will have the remainder in place well before his proposed start time. Senator Hill's outburst is all about trying to distract attention from his failure to act decisively on tree clearing. Senator Hill is using this important issue to try to save his political skin—nothing more, nothing less. This man who claims to be an environmental saviour is the same man who gave Australia the Jabiluka uranium mine. This is the man who gave Australia an 8% increase in its greenhouse gas emissions over the next decade and yet now will not provide Queensland with \$100m to compensate farmers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is the man who excluded forests, greenhouse and tree clearing from his Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and now, having excluded tree clearing from his Act, is trying to use thuggery to achieve his aims. Senator Hill is a job destroyer who is trying to establish his environmental credentials, having betrayed many Australian environmentalists.

I again remind Queensland's environmentalists that on 12 July 1999 Senator Hill convinced the World Heritage Committee not to place Jabiluka on the World Heritage endangered list. On 8 October 1997 Senators Hill and Parer formally approved the mine. Senator Hill has also been responsible for scuttling the Cape York Heads of Agreement by refusing to spend the full \$40m promised at the last Federal election. By comparison, Queensland has produced an historic regional forest agreement that has achieved a balance between conservation and timber production and protected jobs as well as the environment. We have committed \$80m to this process and so far we have not seen a single cent from Senator Hill or the Federal Government. Queensland is working constructively to cooperatively resolve the issue of land clearing on Cape York. I believe that by March next year the Fisheries (East Coast Trawl) Management Plan will be finalised—all of this without Senator Hill lifting a finger.

Let me make this point very clear: if Senator Hill wants to set about destroying the jobs of families from one end of regional Queensland to the other, there will be a day of reckoning and that day of reckoning will be at the ballot box. Today I make it very clear to the whole Parliament that I will not sit by and have family-based businesses in our provincial cities destroyed by some ideologue in Canberra who is not prepared to consult, who does not care about jobs, regional Queensland and that about which he should be caring—namely, Australians.

Let me make it clear, this issue is, if necessary, will be resolved by me and my Government campaigning against every Federal National and Liberal Party member from one end of this State to the other—from Cairns to Coolangatta. We will make this an election issue because this is about protecting jobs. I would have thought that the National and Liberal Parties, the Independents and One Nation members in this place who are about jobs would stand by this Government to fight for Queensland. If we have to fight for Queensland alone, we will.
