



Speech by

KEN TURNER

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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RIVER AND STREAM BARRIERS

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (10.18 a.m.): I have previously spoken about the downstream effect of dams. I raise another issue caused by erecting barriers on rivers and streams. In every instance, great detail is put into the construction of the dam and the use of the accumulated water but very little thought, if any, is given to the enormous impact of these projects on marine life.

For years, anglers have complained about decreasing catches, but it was not until the Australian bass and golden perch had almost disappeared that biologists realised that something was seriously wrong. Migrating fish, such as barramundi, need to get past dams and weirs to complete their breeding cycle. These barriers cause large numbers of fish to be trapped downstream, increasing the risk of disease and local extinction.

Habitat available to fish in coastal rivers has halved since dams and weirs were built. Therefore, when dams, weirs or barriers are designed, the planning of fish ladders must be included to enable the migration of these species. Even when fish ladders are built, they do not always work. Queensland has built 21 fish ladders, which were successful for salmon in North American rivers. Unfortunately, our Australian fish are not spectacular jumpers and are slow swimmers.

That is another case of adopting foreign technology without determining its suitability for local conditions. Without understanding the biological requirements of the fish, it is difficult to design a fish ladder that adequately provides fish passage. Funding of research is uncertain since DNR withdrew funding to two DPI fishway teams halfway through an agreed three-year program.

Queensland has the expertise to restore and maintain fish passage, but without adequate funding that will not happen. We need funding for research to ensure that the mistakes of the past are not repeated. DNR plans to build seven new fishways in the next three years. Considering that there are several thousand barriers in the State, that is insignificant. We need to construct fishways on existing barriers and every new dam or weir should incorporate a suitable fish ladder. We continue to put controls on fishing effort, but we must recognise the real causes of declining fish numbers.
