



Speech by

KEN TURNER

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

Mr TURNER (Thuringowa—IND) (8.59 p.m.): I want to speak on the most important issue affecting commercial fishermen and their families. However, I will not talk on any of the other issues that other members have covered. I think the Minister knows all about them.

For too long the management of fisheries in Queensland has been fragmented. I was a commercial fisherman who started operating many years ago under the old legislation when we had a Fish Board. Nothing has changed in 25 years. The legislation may have changed, the political landscape may have changed, the names of the departments may have changed; but for the fishermen nothing has changed. It has been years of ongoing confusion and uncertainty, with the fishermen being pushed from pillar to post at the whim of politicians and bureaucrats, easily influenced by media beat-ups, and every newly elected Government feeling the need to make their presence felt with more changes. It has been a nightmare of rules being chopped and changed from week to week.

It is time for fishermen to be given certainty in their lives. The industry needs stability. All sections of the industry need stability. The poor trawler operators are suffering interference from Federal and State Governments, GBRMPA and the DPI, and every environmental organisation in the lobbying business is competing for the environmental dollar by making out they are saving something, and I guess they are—their jobs.

Today they are saving the Great Barrier Reef. They claim the ecosystem is slowly dying as bottom trawling strip mines the ocean floor. What rubbish! The reef ecosystem is a robust system. It is certainly under pressure, but it is still robust. The major threat is from the west, not the east. Today it is trawl, tomorrow it is line, the next day it will be gill netting, and then they start all over again. Fisheries management will never understand the Great Barrier Reef or the fishing industry by sitting in a fancy airconditioned office. They should get into the water, go fishing on the boats and see first-hand what is really going on. They should look and listen to real people who care about the preservation of their industry.

I have attended the trawl meetings held in Townsville, and most fishermen support the State Government's proposal for the control of the trawl industry. The Minister should put these measures in place as soon as possible. We certainly need rules and regulations to protect this beautiful piece of Queensland and to protect this very important industry. But for the sake of the Queensland families in the industry, those rules need to be made soon and they need to be rules that will hold up over the course of time to bring a sense of stability to this very distraught industry. We need these people to be able to go out and get on with the job of supplying fresh seafood to the nation.

I disagree entirely with the interference of the Federal Government in Queensland State fisheries. Senator Hill should look very seriously at his advisers, as their decisions are often made on an emotional base rather than any scientific base. I strongly support ridding our State of surplus departments, which duplicate each other and create more headaches for fishing families.

I have given many speeches in this House on issues that would go a long way in maintaining a sustainable fishing industry and environment if my suggestions were adopted, and I believe this Government has been listening. I support the abolition of the QFMA and its amalgamation with the DPI into a single body to be called the Queensland Fisheries Service.