



Speech by

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VESSEL MONITORING SYSTEMS

Dr KINGSTON (Maryborough—Ind) (7.01 p.m.): I rise to identify an area of current legislation which is being applied in a manner that prevents some fishermen from working. It prevents them from working even when they have the correct licences to work within certain fisheries. I refer to the legislation which requires otter trawlers to have a vessel monitoring system installed and operative, except in Moreton Bay.

The legislation does not recognise that a percentage of boats operate under a variety of licences. For instance, I have in my electorate a fisherman with a T1 licence which has not been used a great deal for some years. Thus, until he has a VMS he cannot engage in otter trawling. That is fair. But he also has net, crab, line and beam trawl licences. Each of these licences has its attached rights and regulations. A high percentage of fishing under these licences is done from tenders, which are usually aluminium hulls around 16 to 18 feet in length—without VMSs.

These tenders fishing under crab, net and line licences do not require the installation of a VMS. But currently, when the primary vessel has a T1 licence the owner cannot utilise his tenders and his crab, line and net licences unless he has a VMS. Why? VMSs were initially introduced to monitor the scallop fishery effort, or pressure, on a resource about which not much was known. The VMS was then introduced to prawn trawlers using otter trawls.

The fisherman to whom I am referring does not have a trawler winch or a trawl net. He will have to use his other licences for a long time before he can afford to buy a winch and a trawl, let alone a VMS. Currently the stripe—or the set pocket net fishery—within the Mary River is starting to run. Stripe fishing is a static process. This particular fisherman wants to attach his primary vessel between his two stripes. His prawn cooker and his icebox are permanent fixtures, but the fisherman cannot fish legally until he has a VMS, even in fisheries which do not require a VMS. Thus, this fisherman is prevented from fishing. He is prevented from improving his financial position by this all-inclusive legislation. If he fishes he can be prosecuted. His other option is to apply for unemployment benefits.

All thinking people would applaud the Premier's jobs, jobs, jobs mantra, but it is obvious that his enthusiasm has not penetrated through to the growing bureaucratic layer. I say to the Premier that overzealous bureaucrats are knocking down his building blocks.

Time expired.
