



Speech by

**CHRIS CUMMINS**

**MEMBER FOR KAWANA**

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Hansard 18 September 2002

### **PRIMARY INDUSTRIES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL**

**Mr CUMMINS** (Kawana—ALP) (9.49 p.m.): As a proud descendent of Irish immigrants who proudly worked the land decades—indeed, centuries—ago in and around Upper Freestone via Warwick, I rise to participate in the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2002. It should be realised that the purpose of the Primary Industries Legislation Amendment Bill 2002 is to amend 10 pieces of legislation within the Primary Industries portfolio. The opportunity is being taken to make a few minor amendments to the act. These will provide for clarity in interpretation and ensure the effective operation of the act.

In mentioning the Fisheries Act 1994, may it be known that the main amendment is to insert a new definition of 'ecologically sustainable development'. ESD is to be the primary objective of the act and is based on the definition and guiding principles of ESD as set out in the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development 1992 as previously endorsed by the Queensland government through the Council of Australian Governments. Other amendments are technical in nature for improved administration of the act. These include clarification of the grounds under which an authority may be suspended or cancelled, removing a redundant term and allowing greater flexibility for transfer of an authority and specification of time limits and other matters about fisheries statistical returns. There are also provisions regarding the requirements for production of authorities and for persons administering the estates of aquaculture licence holders.

I believe that the decision made by the Queensland government to introduce a regulation to preserve the status quo for pilchard harvesting in Queensland waters is a correct one. Pilchards are a very important part of the food chain of many species of fish that are targeted by both commercial and recreational fishers and need to be maintained as a sustainable resource, especially as the livelihood of many local families within my electorate and on the Sunshine Coast are dependent on the present local industry. In November last year an information paper on the proposed fishery was released by the Queensland Fisheries Service for public comment. Approximately 92 per cent of the submissions were against the operation commencing and only eight per cent were for the granting of the fishery. It is obvious then that the community did not want the pilchard fishery. I am proud to represent my community by majority.

I believe that the status quo must be maintained and that the minister should be applauded for listening to my community. I know that fishermen across the length and breadth of my beloved Sunshine Coast and indeed Queensland realise that fish stock sustainability is necessary for not only our children but our children's children and indeed their children. If members were ever to be asked how has the government acted to preserve aquatic life on the Sunshine Coast, let me tell them the answer. The Beattie government has acted to preserve aquatic life on the Sunshine Coast by being proactive in its protection of pilchards, which have been identified as an essential component in the marine food chain. Pilchards are an important food source for many reef and pelagic fish such as snapper, mackerel and tailor and for protected species such as dolphins. The taking of pilchards in any significant quantities may adversely disrupt these delicate predator/prey relationships.

A precautionary measure was taken of introducing a regulation that removes the administrative discretion to a general fisheries permit for the commercial taking of pilchards other than for prescribed purposes. The prescribed purposes are for the use of bait by commercial fishers as part of their licensed fishing operations, for research or for display fish. The amendment also provides for authorised commercial fishing tours or fishing competitions to take pilchards using recreational apparatus for the limited use as bait by participants in the tour or competition. The Queensland Fisheries Service has refused the most recent application to harvest pilchards for commercial purposes in accordance with the regulation, and I applaud it. By preserving the status quo for pilchard harvesting in Queensland waters, the government has taken a significant step towards preserving the aquatic ecosystem.

Some of the issues that are facing our rural brothers and sisters on the land are very difficult and there are not all that many easy options. The people of the land are very disappointed in National and Liberal Party members at both a state and federal level. In fact, I have heard the opposition described as about as useful as a hand cranker to a new 6020 series John Deere tractor. I therefore commend the bill to the House.