



Speech by

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MEMBER FOR KAWANA

Hansard 1 May 2003

FISHERIES AMENDMENT REGULATION [NO. 4] 2002

Mr CUMMINS (Kawana—ALP) (5.27 p.m.): In my opinion, anyone with any sense will oppose this disallowance motion. It is important to understand the scope of the regulation and the package of reforms introduced as per the general marine regulatory impact statement released for public comment last year. The new measures included reductions in bag limits for certain species, area and seasonal closures for certain species, regulations pertaining to permitted fishing gear and amendments to the freshwater fishing management plan introduced in 1999 to affect the bag and size limits, fishing gear, closed seasons and closed waters.

More specifically, I will detail the changes across the popular species, such as spotted mackerel, flathead, snapper, pearl perch and teraglin jew to provide a common recreational bag limit of five. In terms of size limits, the minimum size for a flathead has been increased from 30 to 40 centimetres, while the maximum size limit of 70 centimetres has been introduced, as we all should realise that those over 70 centimetres are normally the breeders that we need to ensure keep populating our waterways.

The minimum size limit for snapper has been increased from 30 centimetres to 35 centimetres, and the minimum size limit for pearl perch has been increased from 30 centimetres to 35 centimetres. For tropical rock lobster and east coast crayfish, a seasonal closure prohibiting the taking of crayfish and rock lobster by commercial fishers from October to January the following year in an area from—

Mr Lawlor interjected.

Mr CUMMINS:—latitude 14 degrees south to the northernmost tip of Cape York has been introduced. Actually, I will take the interjection. My mother's family were fisher people, or fishers, and in fact I live in the federal electorate of Fisher and the state electorate of Kawana.

The regulations provide protection of berried and tar spot female lobsters and introduce a minimum size limit for tropical rock lobsters of 115 millimetres tail length and 90 millimetres carapace length. In addition, there is a recreational bag limit of three lobsters per person and six per boat for all Queensland waters north of the commercial fishing area outside of the seasonal closure period, and five lobsters per person and 10 per boat south of the commercial fishing area to the Queensland-New South Wales border. The regulations allow only one diver to collect lobster from each tender and restrict diving for lobster from a primary boat in the commercial industry.

The regulations prohibit finning of sharks by commercial fishers where the fin is removed and the body of the shark is returned to the water. This is recognised as a cruel and barbaric practice and I am glad we are outlawing it.

As a government, we are committed to consultation and getting the balance in fisheries management right. Our aim is the future sustainability of our fisheries and this must be the shared commitment of all stakeholders in the wider community. We must ensure that the one that gets away is due to bad luck and not due to bad management.

We are light years ahead in terms of fisheries management than we were five years ago. The east coast trawl management plan was one of the major fisheries management initiatives the Queensland government took in its last term. This has reduced trawling effort, introduced major closures and made bycatch reduction devices compulsory in that fishery. The key objective of fisheries management is sustainability. The government is working with industry to ensure that the fish stock remains sustainable so that the fishing future is secure. We need to be able to preserve our reputation

as an anglers paradise and as the source of arguably the world's best sea food. Our government is committed to that. Obviously the National and Liberal parties are not.

My question is: does the coalition have a united position on fisheries? I believe the answer must be no. The last disallowance motion moved by the National Party on fisheries management dealt with an experimental pilchard fishery off the Sunshine Coast. The processing plant was in fact in my electorate of Kawana. Let me give members some of the details of that application.

In September 2001 the Fisheries Service received an application for a permit to establish a developmental pilchard fishery between the Breaksea Spit and the New South Wales border. The proposal was for the use of a modified lift net to take pilchards predominantly intended for the domestic human consumption market. In November 2001 an information paper about the proposed fishery was released for public comment. Significant community concern was received about the proposal, with the QFS advising that 262 of the 286 submissions received were opposed to it—262 against and obviously 24 in favour. That is more than ten to one opposed to the pilchard fishery.

Yet in this House the opposition moved a disallowance motion and tried to overturn that decision. Ten to one against—the people did not want this fishery, yet the opposition tried to go along the lines of 'Let us have it. Let us rape and pillage a finite resource which is found in our oceans.' The Beattie government introduced a regulation that preserved existing entitlements while removing the discretion of the Queensland Fisheries Service to issue general fisheries permits allowing the taking of pilchards for trade or commerce other than for prescribed purposes. The regulation was announced in May 2002. There was no existing entitlement for the commercial take of pilchards in Queensland waters for human consumption. Therefore the regulation did not impinge on any operational pilchards caught in Queensland waters for human consumption.

The National Party moved the disallowance motion last year. Obviously our government did not support the motion, but nor did the Liberals. So can someone tell me how this de facto marriage is going thus far? Have they worked out a position on ensuring that our valuable resource is not further plundered? I call on the Liberal Party to support the government once again and reject this motion. I invite all members to come to the Sunshine Coast and have a walk along any beaches, preferably the Kawana beaches, and ask the locals how hard it is to get a catch of fish. If the conservatives had their way, they would allow our waters to be fished out like some parts of Asia. Why is it that the Liberal Party do not care for future generations?

As Brownie says, let us not destroy what we came here to enjoy. I consider many professional and amateur fishermen to be good friends. I listen to what they say as often as I can as they have valuable local knowledge.

As I say, back in 1979 when my parents first bought a block of land in Kawana, it was not uncommon to walk down on to the beach and to see dozens of fishermen—both men and women—fishing. There would be men and women lined up, not as many as can be seen on Fraser Island, but when there were tailor running or any sort of other fish that were around at the time, dozens and dozens of people would be out fishing and getting a feed. Unfortunately, now it is extremely difficult. The majority of the people I speak to say that they go fishing for the fun of it. They do not expect to catch anything. They are often disappointed. Sometimes people go out to fish just to get one or two fish for themselves, their wives and possibly their children.

We cannot overfish the limited resource that we have. Unfortunately, in the propaganda being put about by the pilchard fishery people, they are arguing that because we see sharks and whales chasing large schools of pilchards, it is okay to clean them all out. Everyone should realise that there is a food change within the aquatic world and that, if we continue to plunder one resource, Queensland and Australia will end up like many other areas around the world that have been fished out. Once certain areas are fished out, that also impacts on the reefs and so on. I will proudly vote against this disallowance motion.