



Speech by

Hon. HENRY PALASZCZUK

MEMBER FOR INALA

Hansard 1 May 2003

FISHERIES AMENDMENT REGULATION [NO. 4] 2002

Hon. H. PALASZCZUK (Inala—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries and Rural Communities) (6.07 p.m.): I thank all honourable members for their contributions. In doing so, I would like to refer to some of the issues that were raised by some of the honourable members. I will start off by referring to the contribution of the honourable member for Gregory. I would like to thank him for his contribution; but, unfortunately, I believe that the honourable member for Gregory comes from a school of thought that if there is a fish in the sea, it should be caught.

The decision by the government in relation to spotted mackerel is the right one. I do not believe that the National Party has any concern for the future of our fisheries. It refused to implement necessary changes when it was in government. The East Coast Trawl Management Plan was too hard for the National Party government.

I will go through a summary of regulation amendments made in 2002. These are the amendments that the opposition is attempting to disallow: a closure to the taking of black jewfish adjacent to the northern area of Cape York; new measures to protect dusky or mud flathead stocks, which means a recreational bag limit of five flathead; an increase in the minimum size and a maximum size limit; new measures to protect key rocky reef fin fish stocks; and the minimum size for snapper has been increased from 30 centimetres to 35 centimetres. Why? To protect the stock. The minimum size for pearl perch has been increased from 30 centimetres to 35 centimetres. Why? To protect the stock.

The recreational bag limit for snapper has been decreased from 30 to five. Why? To protect the stock. The recreational bag limit for pearl perch has been decreased from 10 to five. The recreational bag limit for teraglin jew has been decreased from 10 to five. Why? To protect the stock.

Then there are the new measures to protect spotted mackerel stocks. This is what honourable members opposite have been talking about. What about the increase in minimum size for spotted mackerel from 50 centimetres to 60 centimetres? The recreational bag limit for spotted mackerel has been reduced from 30 to five. It goes on. The taking of queenfish, yellowtail, kingfish, black kingfish and catfish from Platypus Bay is now prohibited to reduce the potential for ciguatera poisoning. Also, the area of the Mary River in which set pocket nets may be used has been increased.

There are new measures to improve the management of the aquarium fishery, a very important fishery. Two new fishery symbols apply to that. There are new measures to improve management of the beche-de-mer fishery. There is a recreational bag limit of five. We require commercial collectors to install a VMS system. We are allowing for beche-de-mer authorities to be transferred.

There are new measures to manage the beach and bloodworm fisheries. I can just imagine the screams of the Minister for Innovation and Information Economy when he learns that the opposition is attempting to disallow the closure of worm digging along the foreshores from Lota to Wynnum. He and his constituents have fought so hard to enable it to be included in this regulation. There are new measures to protect crayfish and rock lobsters. What the opposition is on about is only a small part of the regulation.

The honourable member for Beaudesert referred to Carpbusters. I was not able to attend that day, so I requested my director-general to go in my stead. I have previously attended Carpbusters at Beaudesert. I think it is a great community program. I know that the honourable member for Beaudesert is a very strong supporter of that program. We all know that carp are a pest; however, in countries in the Middle East carp are regarded as a prized eating fish. I am not aware of the damage

the member mentioned in relation to the golf course, but I would be happy to get further advice from the DPI for the benefit of the member.

Let us look at the issue raised by honourable members opposite about netting for spotted mackerel. When a RIS is undertaken a questionnaire goes out and we ask the community to make comments. On this subject the community made a very loud and clear comment. The question asked was, 'Do you agree with the use of ring nets to target spotted mackerel?' Those who agreed numbered 150. Those who disagreed numbered 1,124. Those who responded with no comment numbered 103. From the recreational sector, 29 agreed and 885 disagreed. Of the commercial fishers, 95 agreed with the use of ring nets to target spotted mackerel while 96 disagreed with the use of ring nets to target spotted mackerel. The government has listened to community concerns and has acted.

Mr Lingard interjected.

Mr PALASZCZUK: That is only the commercial fishers. They are divided—split in half. Looking at the general response, 150 agreed and 1,124 disagreed.

Mr Lingard: Only commercial fishers are using those nets.

Mr PALASZCZUK: Ninety-five commercial fishermen agreed with the use of ring nets. Ninety-six commercial fishers disagreed with the use of ring nets. They would prefer the use of lines. That is why the government has acted in the way it has.

Unfortunately, the National Party is seeking to disallow a lot more than just the spotted mackerel issue. It seems to be quite happy with that. National Party members should be explaining to fishers in those communities why it is disallowing the entire regulation. They can explain to the commercial and recreational fishers that they do not believe in any restriction on fishing, that they believe it should be open slather—'catch what you like and in whatever quantities you like'.

Let us look at the illegal fishers from Indonesia mentioned by the honourable member for Thuringowa. We have heard that the National Party supports shark finning by moving this disallowance motion. It agrees with shark finning because that is what it is saying. That is why it wants to disallow this regulation. Obviously it wants to see the continuation of the practice of cutting off the fin of a shark and returning the rest of it alive to the water. That is what it proposes through this disallowance motion. National Party members say that this motion is about spotted mackerel, but it is about a lot more than that.

No-one from the Liberal Party is present in the chamber. There has been no-one from the Liberal Party in the chamber all afternoon. Liberal Party members are trying to hide in relation to these matters, but they cannot. They say that they are in a coalition with the National Party. So let us see where the Liberal Party stands. The Liberals supported the government in retaining the status quo for pilchards when the National Party did not.

The Liberals in this state have among their members the current federal fisheries minister, Ian Macdonald. Senator Macdonald is the fifth federal fisheries minister under the Howard government, but I believe that he is doing a good job. I believe that he has invigorated his portfolio. This month he has pledged to outline the outcome of the Commonwealth fisheries review, which the federal government announced three years ago. Senator Macdonald has, for example, taken a strong approach on shark conservation and the issue of shark finning. The Queensland government has implemented a range of shark conservation measures. We have also banned trawlers harvesting sharks off the state's east coast. We are serious about that issue. We as a government are working with Senator Ian Macdonald to implement a national shark conservation plan. The issue for the Liberals, who are not present in this House, is whether they support the endeavours of the Liberal Party at a federal level or whether they will bow to the National Party in Queensland.

The other important issue that the opposition did not mention relates to snapper. One of the species in danger of being overfished is snapper. The Queensland Fisheries Service has had grave concerns about the sustainability of snapper stocks. These concerns have also been reflected by industry. The current condition and trends report 1988-2000 indicates clearly that snapper are overexploited in the southern part of the state where a majority of the snapper fishing in Queensland occurs. Snapper have been fished in Queensland throughout the 20th century, with a significant period of high harvest rates after World War II. Since then, the catch of larger fish appears to have declined. This species is heavily targeted by recreational fishers. Recreational fishing accounts for greater than 80 per cent of the total catch. Commercial harvests have tended to decrease throughout the state since 1998.

What does the regulation do? As I said earlier, it increases the minimum size limit from 30 centimetres to 35 centimetres to allow the opportunity for the fish to spawn more than once before capture. In addition, we have reduced the bag limit for snapper from 30 to five. It is important that these measures have been introduced not merely to maintain stock levels but also to help the stock recover.

In relation to the aquarium fishery, the package of reforms that included the new measures for spotted mackerel included important changes to the aquarium fishery. We are removing the restriction on the transferability of the authority, or permit, held by operators in the commercial aquarium fishery.

In conclusion, I refer to the honourable member for Gladstone. She raised a very important issue in relation to VMSs. I have taken on board what she has said. If there are hardship cases, we will certainly extend the three-month time limit. I do not support the motion moved by the members opposite.