



Speech by

LEX BELL, MP

MEMBER FOR SURFERS PARADISE

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GOLD COAST FISHERMENS COOPERATIVE

Mr BELL (Surfers Paradise—Ind) (11.51 a.m.): Commercial fishing on the Gold Coast is one of our very earliest industries. Historically, it was the second industry—second only to timber getting. The fishing fleet at the Gold Coast has continued at the Spit in the electorate of Surfers Paradise continually from the mid-1850s. Nowadays not only do they provide fresh seafood; they are a very firm part of the Gold Coast tourism industry. I think I can say without fear of contradiction that seeing the fishing fleet go out on the Broadwater at sundown or coming in at sunrise strikes a chord with most residents. Certainly, it is a vista that people capture on canvas and love to see. I am sure, too, that my fellow Gold Coast members would agree that the Gold Coast fishing fleet operating from the Spit is part of the Gold Coast's heritage.

Unfortunately, the lease of the premises of the Gold Coast Fishery Cooperative expired in 1999. Endeavours were made to negotiate a fresh lease with the Department of Natural Resources. The department has not unreasonably come forward with two matters that it said would be a bar to the commencement of lease negotiations. The first was the existence of the Gold Coast Harbour Vision 2020 study and the other was the existence of a native title claim. The fishing fleet is now in possession only of a permit to occupy, which can be terminated virtually at any time. That does not give very much security to people who have to expend hundreds of thousands on boats and equipment. It does not do very much for the expansion or even the continuation of the industry.

A report in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* on 26 March this year mentioned a representative of the minister's office as saying that the issue of the lease dispute was one for the Gold Coast City Council under its 2020 Harbour Vision plan. I have with me a copy of the minutes of that Gold Coast Harbour Vision 2020 meeting of 24 February 2003, when the committee unanimously—I repeat, unanimously—resolved that the council on behalf of the committee should encourage the state government to facilitate a development at the trawler site which will secure the fleet's tenure and build on the seafood and waterfront theme. Also in the *Gold Coast Bulletin* of 26 March Mayor Gary Baidon was reported as follows—I repeat this lest it be said that it was only a committee decision—

Gold Coast Mayor Gary Baidon said both he and the council fully supported a permanent home for the fleet in their present location.

I repeat, 'in their present location'. The issue of any concern of the Gold Coast Harbour Vision 2020 committee has certainly been resolved. There is no issue there. There is total support for the fishing fleet to have its lease renewed at its present location. As a former member of the Gold Coast native title committee negotiating with the Koombumerri people, I also know that the Koombumerri people have no problems with the continuation of the fishing fleet. Over the years a number of members of the tribe have worked on the fishing fleet. Recently, I noted that Ariadne, no doubt with the support of the department, was able to negotiate an agreement under the native title legislation for another allotment at the Southport Spit not far from where the commercial fishermen operate. That would suggest to me very clearly that now is the right time for negotiations under native title to continue in relation to the area occupied by the commercial fishermen.

Now that the problems have evaporated, I urge the minister to enter into meaningful negotiations urgently with representatives of the Gold Coast Fishermens Cooperative with a view to resolving this matter. It would be very much in the interests of the Gold Coast and would be supported greatly by the people of the Gold Coast if a new lease could be negotiated and resolved.