



Speech by  
**Mike Horan**

**MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH**

Hansard Wednesday, 16 June 2004

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## **COMMERCIAL AND RECREATIONAL FISHING**

**Mr HORAN** (Toowoomba South—NPA) (5.23 p.m.): I move—

That this parliament condemns the Beattie government for its overzealous attack on the commercial and recreational fishing industries in Queensland and calls for:

- (a) a structural adjustment package to commercial fishermen adversely affected by the coral reef fin fishery management plan and other recently introduced fishing restrictions; and
- (b) all decisions relating to commercial and recreational fisheries management, including complementary zoning of State waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and the proposed Great Sandy Strait Marine Park be based on accurate science, honesty and true consultation with the commercial and recreational fishing sectors.

The fishing industry in Queensland has taken an absolute hammering from the Beattie Labor government. Let me go through some of the issues and problems where this government has trampled over the fishing industry without proper consultation, without truth, without science and, worst of all, without one jot of attention or desire to provide any compensation for these hard-working fishing families who have had great chunks of their living simply torn and taken away from them.

In the Coral Reef fin fishery management plan the Queensland government has reduced the total catch level in this fishery from 4,830 tonnes to 3,061 tonnes, not to mention a whole range of new size limits, bag limits, spawning closures and increases to the no-take species list that affects both commercial and recreational fishermen. The Queensland Seafood Industry Association estimates that the changes will mean a loss of \$20 million in the commercial industry, which equates to about 500 jobs directly. Imagine all the jobs in the indirectly associated processing and post-harvest industries. There is also a massive impact on the recreational fishing sector and the boating industry, particularly the small boating industry which has to comply with a whole stack of new regulations.

In contrast to the federal government's announcement of an initial starting point of \$10 million in structural adjustment assistance to help adversely affected fishermen with more to come, the state government has done nothing. The state government says there is no legal obligation and refuses to acknowledge its moral obligations. I note that in the state budget there is \$950,000 to enforce the Coral Reef plan, but there is no funding for compensation. If the Beattie government wants to persist in taking away the rights of the individual for what it claims is to benefit the whole community, then it should be prepared to pay on behalf of the whole community.

Then there is the recent backflip on the Coral Reef fin fishery changes. While there has been some acknowledgment of the impact of this plan on long-term fishermen, the Primary Industries Minister's recent backflip is merely a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul. The government is taking quota off other fishermen who have already paid for their allocation and for their quotas to help these long-term operators. The CRC reef centre, which Environment Minister John Mickel has cried crocodile tears over in recent weeks, put out a paper earlier this year which suggested such a large reduction in coral trout catch levels is not biologically necessary. The minister could easily increase the levels in this fishery and the fishery would still be sustainable, but after six years of working to introduce this plan the Labor government still cannot get it right.

Finally, there is the issue of complementary zoning. The Queensland government has undertaken to zone state waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in what might be called a complementary fashion to the recent Commonwealth representative areas program. That is the program to which I alluded. It has a \$10.2 million starting point for compensation for claims in that area for loss of income by fishers in that area.

The complementary zoning has the potential to devastate hundreds of in-shore fishing operations. These operations cater for about 80 per cent of the mud crabs and the barramundi that is caught—the iconic catch of Queensland which is so much a part of our tourism and our seafood industry.

This is going to have a massive impact on recreational fishermen as well who fish in the local rivers and creeks that will be caught up in this complementary zoning, which is an area that covers out to the low water mark. There was a meeting in Cairns recently. It was one of the 13 meetings held at 13 different ports on the coast. At those meetings the fishermen expressed their disgust with the state government. More than 50 fishermen walked out of the Cairns meeting in disgust with the plans for these complementary no-go zones.

The Queensland government voluntarily undertook to adopt these complementary zonings. The government did it on its own. The Environment Minister and the Primary Industries Minister will try to mislead people in Queensland and mislead their backbench members that it was something that it had to do. It was not. In the submission that it took to the Commonwealth government it voluntarily said that it would put, of its own volition, these complementary zones in to complement the RAP zones in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. That is the problem. There is no need for the vast majority of these complementary zones. They will not do anything for the sustainability because they simply cover the low water mark. As I said, they cover 80 per cent of the catch of barramundi and mud crabs in Queensland.

The Queensland government's position on complementary zoning should be seen for what it is. It is the government's idea and it is the one which should have made the decision on this way, way back. When it does finally make a decision, and if it does it on our basis of having proper and truthful consultation with the fishing industry, then there should also be compensation for taking away the legitimate wages and income of these hardworking people.

The Great Sandy marine park which is proposed in the area basically from Bundaberg to the Noosa River is planned to create a marine park and it has been under consideration for some two years. It was supposed to go public last year but two Labor members in the area had it slowed down and stopped because they know the damage it will do to employment in their area, particularly Hervey Bay. I notice the member for Hervey Bay is not speaking in this debate. I am pleased the member for Cook is speaking in the debate because he knows the problems that the hardworking people in Cooktown will have. They will lose so much of their income from the mud crab and barramundi and fishing areas under the complementary zoning arrangement that the Beattie Labor government proposes.

I return now to the matter of the Great Sandy Strait Marine Park. The member for Hervey Bay, and the ex member for Burnett, knew the difficulties this would bring about when there is so much unemployment in Hervey Bay. It has one of the highest youth unemployment figures in Australia, and certainly in Queensland. Hundreds of jobs and flow-on jobs will be lost if this is done incorrectly, untruthfully and without consultation with the fishing industry. Through the Queensland government closures, the potential closures of the complementary zones and the GBRMPA closures by that authority, recreational fishing has suffered enormous blows, as have the associated bait and boating industries.

I turn now to grey nurse shark protection. Thousands of recreational fishers lost out in December last year when the Beattie government refused to adopt a commonsense approach to protecting grey nurse sharks—an approach that would protect fishing and associated industry jobs. The government did not need to shut down fishing in four key areas around Moreton Bay, Stradbroke Island and Double Island Point to ensure protection of grey nurse sharks. They are bottom dwellers. The people who lost their income over this fiasco were trolling around the top of these areas. I spoke to one fisherman who has been trolling this area for over 30 years and he has never seen a grey nurse shark, let alone caught one. The sharks are down in the sandy area at the bottom of the rocks. Fishermen are so many fathoms up the top, nowhere near the sharks. The government has closed a one-and-a-half kilometre radius around this particular rock and, as a result, two fishing families have lost one-third of their income with no compensation whatsoever. That is how the Beattie government treats the hardworking fishing families of Queensland—with no commonsense, just obscene haste, chasing the Green vote; no truth, accuracy, science or the practical knowledge that resides with the fishing families.

Some matters discussed in this debate are just the tip of the iceberg of what the Beattie government has done to the commercial and recreational fishing sector. Bear in mind that some 40,000 small-boat recreational fishermen visit some of those fishing spots that I have mentioned. The charter boat operators have taken something like 10,000 people a year to those particular places. I have spoken to fishing families and fishing industry people and they are absolutely committed to sustainable industry that ensures a future for all Queenslanders, their industry, their family and the environment. What we need is what we

have in the motion moved by the opposition. There needs to be true consultation. There needs to be truth and accurate science. There needs to be a structural adjustment package because if you take away the living and income of people, it is just not right, it is just not fair. If it is being done for the environment and the common good, then everybody should pay. That is only fair. That is the moral way to address these particular issues.

I call on the government to heed our motion tonight. It is about truth, honesty and science. Stop the obscene and untruthful chase for Green votes. Do something right by hardworking fishing families, decent Queenslanders, and bring in a structural package and listen to the fishing industry, the recreational fishing industry, and the boating industry.