



Speech by

Mike Horan

MEMBER FOR TOOWOOMBA SOUTH

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FISHING INDUSTRY

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (8.57 p.m.): The Queensland government's fish enclosures in inshore waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park are going to have a devastating effect on recreational and commercial fishermen and hundreds of jobs associated with the seafood industry for little or no environmental or scientific reason. This plan will affect 600 kilometres of coastline between Baffle Creek near Bundaberg right up to Cape York, banning amateurs from fishing along beaches and shutting down key commercial fishing grounds. The plans will, in particular, hurt barramundi and mud crab fishermen and their families.

The Beattie government and Environment Minister, John Mickel, have been making a range of misleading claims about their plan. They have been trying to suggest the federal government is forcing the state government to match Commonwealth zoning in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park in state waters. They have been saying that the federal government should provide compensation for the state's decision to close these fishing areas. This is utter and complete nonsense and a fact confirmed publicly on numerous occasions by federal Environment Minister Ian Campbell and in correspondence with the fishing industry.

In a media release on 12 August, Senator Campbell stated that at no time did the Commonwealth request Premier Peter Beattie or Minister John Mickel to take any action whatsoever within Queensland waters to mirror the Commonwealth's recent rezoning plan. Senator Campbell went on to say, 'I have written to the Queensland government and asked them to match the Commonwealth's structural adjustment package. They have refused that financial support to the fishing industry and the fishermen themselves.'

Despite all the Beattie government's attempts to bring these changes in under the radar, trying to pass the buck to the Commonwealth, it is clear these fish enclosures are a state government decision and it is the state government's responsibility to compensate affected fishers.

The state plan has been condemned by recreational and commercial fishers alike. A sample of some of the public comments made by the fishing industry include the following—

Closing huge strips of inshore waters to commercial fishing, and in many cases to recreational fishing as well, will force large numbers of operators out of the industry, right through from fishing operations and processors and related businesses.

That was from the Queensland Seafood Industry Association CEO, Duncan Souter, in the *Herbert River Express* on 31 July.

What it will do is totally wipe out costal fishing in Cook Shire, with the exception of Princess Charlotte Bay.

That was from the Cape York Marine Advisory Group chair, Ian McCollum, in the *Cooktown Local News* on 28 July.

This is an unfair attack on our way of life—for as long as I can remember it's been the great Aussie tradition for parents to take their kids down to the beach for some fishing and now it seems like we can't even do that anymore.

That was from Sunfish North Queensland president, Brian Pickup, in the *Pioneer News* on 29 July.

The Queensland Boating Industry Association said yesterday recreational fishing families will be hardest hit by the proposal to shut another 20 per cent of the state's recreational fishing grounds.

That was a report in the *Townsville Bulletin* on 29 July.

Through my consultation with commercial fisherman I have learnt that there are some 20 to 30 key fishing grounds where closures will have a detrimental effect and impact on their industry. These range from areas in Cape York such as Temple Bay and Port Stewart through to areas around Hinchinbrook Island, Cape Pallarenda and Cleveland Bay near Townsville, Pioneer Bay near Airlie Beach down to Broadsound and Shoalwater Bay north of Yeppoon.

Primary Industries and Fisheries Minister, Henry Palaszczuk, has been sadly missing in action on this issue and, as usual, he refuses to stand up for Queensland fishing families. In fact, all we have heard from the Fisheries Minister is comments on ABC Radio on 4 August that he does not believe there will be a major impact. The minister even claimed, 'I am sure commercial fishers later on will really appreciate what we did.' Imagine the hurt that is happening to families now. What about fishermen today? The government is quite happy to throw them on the scrap heap with no compensation in its obscene chase for green votes. We have members of parliament such as the members for Whitsunday, Cook, Mackay, Thuringowa and Keppel, to name a few, sitting silently while their hard-working constituents are left high and dry by this callous state government.

These closures are not chickenfeed, as the Premier heartlessly suggested. These closures are going to cost jobs, putting fishing families and others who rely on a vibrant local seafood industry out of business. The assault does not end there, with the Primary Industries Minister stating that the Beattie government will look at further restricting inshore commercial and recreational fishing through the proposed east coast inshore finfish management plan. It is time the government stopped this never-ending assault on Queensland commercial fishermen and started basing its decision on the true science, honesty, accuracy and real consultation rather than this dishonest, dismissive approach we have seen to date. It is time the government stood back and took a deep breath and tried to help these commercial and recreational fishing families and the industries along the coast, and brought a bit of science and accuracy into this whole debate. This is going to be an environmental disaster. They are forcing more fishers into fewer and fewer areas.