



Speech by

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FISHERIES AMENDMENT BILL

Mr HORAN (Toowoomba South—NPA) (11.30 am): The Fisheries Amendment Bill 2006 provides this parliament with an opportunity to look at a number of issues that are addressed by this bill, but very importantly it is an opportunity for us to discuss many of the important issues that currently relate to the fishing industry and to recognise the importance of the fishing industry to Queensland.

The fishing industry is part of the \$11 billion of production under the auspices of the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries and plays a very important role not only in our domestic economy and our export economy but also, importantly, in the recreational and social side of our communities—not only the length and breadth of Queensland's coastline but also the inland area.

Our commercial fishing industry provides us with a portion of the fish on our plates in homes throughout Queensland. Sadly, more and more of the fish provided in our restaurants and available for people to take home are being imported from overseas. A massive amount is being imported from the Mekong Delta in Vietnam because of the never-ending restrictions that are being put on our own fishing families here in Queensland. Our fishing families and businesses also provide a big boost to the export economy of this nation. When we look at the ports throughout Queensland—from the Gold Coast through Moreton Bay, Sunshine Coast, Tin Can Bay, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay, Townsville, Innisfail, Cairns and up into the gulf itself—we realise the extent to which the commercial fishing industry is an important part of the decentralisation of Queensland. Aside from the ports themselves, there are also many smaller fishing communities along the coast mostly taking part in inshore fishing such as barramundi fishing and other net fishing.

The industry of recreational fishing has not received the sort of respect and support that it should have from governments in the past. There are almost 900,000 recreational fishers in the population of Queensland. About one in four Queenslanders go fishing at least once a year, and many of them go fishing many times a year. When we look at the whole spectrum of recreational fishing—bait shops, the boating industry, the tackle industry, service stations, trailers, the sale of vehicles, the sale of food, the sale of bait and so forth—we see that it is a massive industry which deserves recognition and needs, like the commercial industry, secure accessibility to sustainable fishing areas.

The other important aspect of recreational fishing is its immense social value to the families of Queensland. We in this parliament often hear sad stories about the department of families, the police department, the Department of Child Safety or other areas that are trying to help families in the raising of children. There can be nothing greater than the ability of families to spend time together and to go fishing. We should always remember and recognise that fishing is probably the healthiest social activity that families can do together. Families can share in the enjoyment of fishing. Mothers and fathers can teach their children how to fish and children learn to value our fishing resources, to value the sites from which they fish, to value the environment, to understand breeding cycles, currents, temperatures and so forth, but, more importantly, to understand how good it is to have quality time together with their family and to work and fish together.

Aquaculture is another very important part of our fishing industry. In particular, it provides a way in which quality fish can be produced to reach a target market. Recently I had the pleasure of visiting an establishment on the Gold Coast that is involved in the production of barramundi and perch to restaurant size. It was quite amazing in terms of the technology that was being used to produce these fish in an odourless fashion with no noise and no threat to the environment. It was being done within an industrial complex at Helensvale on the Gold Coast. It was quite outstanding.

Many areas of Queensland are involved in aquaculture, particularly in north Queensland and the area from Innisfail to Tully. Whilst we recognise the need for good environmental systems, many of these people have had some extreme difficulties with the EPA. I have spoken before in this parliament about the need for partnership rather than confrontation in helping organisations develop good businesses along good environmental guidelines and to work in cooperation rather than getting out there and dead-set trying to catch someone, fine them and ruin their business. If they work together and cooperate, everybody will get a lot further.

Another area of fishing that is often overlooked is tourism fishing. Tourism fishing is a very important industry for many of the tourist ports of Queensland. Sadly, many of those have been knocked about by some of the RAP zones. Only the other night I was talking to someone who had lost up to two-thirds of his particular business of taking people out on recreational fishing trips. If we talk to people in ports like those north Queensland ports where tourism is important, central Queensland or even down here in south-east Queensland, we realise what an important business tourism fishing is and how it is important to the whole spectrum of tourism.

Finally, of course, there is inland fishing. Many people fish in the stocked impoundments or the western rivers. Whilst it is a different type of fishing altogether, there is the accessibility of being able to fish in our western streams or in the dams of the state. I do compliment those people who work on a voluntarily basis to see that those dams are stocked to provide enjoyment to others and those who have been working with the inland fishing groups on things such as the resnagging of some of our rivers. That has proved to be a successful scheme, although it has been quite a small scheme to date. It has brought about a proliferation of our own native species as opposed to carp, which digs into the banks of the rivers. Once the rivers are cleared of native fish it gives the carp a clear go to get into the rivers and spread. Once the rivers are resnagged, the native fish are able to take back their environment and build up their numbers and virtually drive the carp away.

With this whole issue of fishing legislation and regulations, we need some practical common sense and the genuine involvement of those people in the industry, be it commercial, recreational or other areas of fishing that I have spoken about. Time and time again we have seen decisions made which have not been practical, which have caused enormous hardship to people in the commercial and recreational industry and which could have been avoided in many cases by good, sensible discussions with people who know and understand their industry, particularly with people who know and understand particular parts of the coastline.

The Queensland coastline is so variable and so massive, and there are people who are experts on different parts of the coast who know and understand that and who can provide good advice. Recreational and commercial fishermen know and understand bag limits, line limits, slots and other types of rotational closures and they can provide practical, common-sense advice that can see a win-win for the fishing community and a real win for sustainability.

What concerns many people in the fishing industry—and it certainly concerns me and my colleagues—is the pandering by the Beattie government to the extreme Greens. We saw it with the western hardwoods, an area that won world acclaim for the sustainability of its forest system. Now it is to be closed down. Mills have been bought out of that area. But what is Australia and Queensland going to do for timber? We will probably have to import more and more of our timber from some of the worst forest areas of the world—from areas that are clear-felled—whereas we had right on our doorstep the most sustainable and ecologically balanced system of limited harvest over periods like 40 years for each separate block. They would take something like one or two trees from an area the size of a football and allow the juvenile and almost mature trees to grow. We saw that closed down for reasons of preferences from the extreme Greens.

The public are sick of it and the fishing fraternity are sick of it. They know that secret deals have been done. They know the secret deals that could well be done with the zones in Moreton Bay. It will not be announced before the election but it will certainly happen after the election. They know that it happens. They know it happened with the grey nurse area. They know that it is around the corner with the Moreton Bay zones. People are fed up with these secret deals. That is why we see fishing people get together to fight against these extreme green philosophies that have pervaded the Labor government. The extreme Greens have such a channel into the Premier's department. That is where the orders and the instructions come from. People have woken up to it, they know it and they no longer trust the Beattie government.

The fishing industry has been hammered over the past few years from pillar to post. I do not think we have ever seen an industry that has copped such a hammering. I remember going to a port meeting at Tin

Can Bay one day. What struck me was the anguish of the women and the families who had such uncertainty hanging over them all the time. Like all businesses, they have no doubt borrowed. They have to repay the investments in their industry. They have to go out to sea. With the various restrictions that have been put on fishing families today, sometimes they have to go out to sea in more difficult conditions because of the limited time in which to go out there with various closures. Spawning closures and other factors mean that there are only so many nights or so many days a month that they can fish. So they are going out in more inclement weather, they are going out further and the whole occupation is becoming more dangerous. At the same time, they never have any certainty in what they do. What is the next review or the next restriction or the next closure that is around the corner?

I think there are many parts of the commercial fishing industry that are leading the world in the development of equipment, methods and systems that can provide for sustainable fishing, that can provide fish on the table for the population of Australia and parts of the world and at the same time have exclusion devices and specific trawling systems that can absolutely limit the bycatch. I think our fishing families are at the cutting edge in the world, with the systems and mechanisms that they have developed. In fact, in Moreton Bay we have a group which has won acclaim and awards for sustainability from the DPI for what it has been able to achieve. I take this opportunity to complement the fishing industry for the responsible way in which I think it has addressed sustainability.

If we look at the second reading speech of this bill the minister said that 2005 was a year of consolidation. The former fisheries minister, Minister Palaszczuk, put it a little more bluntly than that. He was reported in the January 2005 edition of the *Queensland Fisherman* magazine as saying that the fishing industry has been 'screwed' enough and it is time we took a step back.

In a bill that addresses compensation issues for fishermen, it is worth us having a look now at how the Beattie Labor government has hammered the fishing industry over the past few years. There has been a string of examples of fishing restrictions that have been introduced through fisheries regulations or marine park zonings which have impacted severely on commercial fishermen, yet the Beattie Labor government has refused to provide any assistance to offset these impacts. The most obvious example is the coral reef finfish plan, which cut commercial catches from about 4,800 tonnes to 3,061 tonnes and reduced fishing licences from 1,700 to less than 400. We have seen reports from the CRC saying that they got the quota wrong and that the quota could have been increased from 3,061 with great safety for the protection and sustainability of that particular species within the Barrier Reef.

It is very interesting to look at some of the figures for the harvesting of the reef. The amount of fish caught and harvested on the reef per hectare is virtually minuscule compared with what is regarded as a safe and sustainable practice for reefs worldwide. None of us would argue that there should have been a management plan for the coral trout fishery. Indeed, it was the coalition which first signalled our intention to properly manage this fishery back in 1997. The issue is how the Beattie Labor government dealt with the impacts of the plan once it was finalised and released after six years of dithering. Despite the clear potential for the plan to have a massive impact on coral reef fishers, the Beattie Labor government did not commission research into the impacts on industry or coastal communities before the plan took effect on 1 July 2004. Indeed, it had the arrogance to say in the regulatory impact statement proposing the massive catch reductions that 'it is considered unlikely that the amendments as proposed in this RIS would have substantial adverse impacts on employment levels in the commercial and recreational fishing sectors'.

Of course, after the plan was in place, the Beattie government then decided to fund through the Department of Employment and Training—not the Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries—a study into the effects of the coral reef management plan. This study found that the plan had cost Queensland communities about 700 full-time jobs, with about \$20 million to \$30 million ripped out of local economies. The worst affected regions included Cairns, where 93 jobs were lost; Bundaberg, where 78 jobs were lost; the minister's own area of Mackay, where 53 jobs were lost; Port Douglas, where 51 jobs were lost; Bowen, where 47 jobs were lost; and Gladstone, where 44 jobs were lost. What support did the Beattie Labor government offer? The usual: a low-interest loan program that achieved nothing and helped virtually no-one. We have seen it in virtually every sector of primary industries and fisheries—the offer of loans, which only heaps more and more debt upon the shoulders of people.

The government offered no structural adjustment package, just the Coral Reef Fishery Temporary Assistance Scheme, which in the end provided loans to just three people. The coral reef plan was just one of a string of state government hits on the commercial fishing industry in which long-serving fishermen had their livelihoods trashed for the so-called greater good without one cent of assistance. Examples include closures around Fraser Island which locked fishing families out of the mullet fishery. Two fishing families were shut out of the Baffle Creek area. There was also the spotted mackerel fishery in which 40 to 50 families have faced massive losses of income after a ban on ring netting was introduced despite two independent scientific studies confirming the apparatus as green and clean.

Of course, it is not just the fisheries management plans and regulations that impact on fishermen. Marine park rezonings can have as big or an even bigger impact. While obviously one of the biggest changes in recent years has been the rezoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park by the federal

government, there have also been marine park changes made by the state government and more are on the drawing board. There is one key difference between the federal coalition government's approach and the state Labor government's approach on these issues. The coalition believes that if individuals are affected by a decision made by government for a wider community benefit, such as the rezoning of a marine park, those affected individuals should be compensated. In stark contrast, Labor rides roughshod over individuals and has no regard for the impact of its decision on individuals. One of the greatest examples of that was the complementary zoning that affected so much of this coast and mirrored the areas of the RAP zones on the Great Barrier Reef, and absolutely no compensation whatsoever was paid.

The prime example was, as I said, the complementary zoning of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. The Beattie Labor government's approach to the issue of complementary zoning in state waters adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef has been characterised by deceit, secrecy and complete indifference to the social and economic impacts of this plan. A study by the University of Queensland conservatively estimated that these state fishing closures will cost the seafood industry more than \$6 million a year and at least 150 jobs. The impact is not just on commercial and recreational fishermen but also on the shops that service those industries as well as the tourism industry.

The Beattie government dishonestly claimed that the federal government should pay, which was just ridiculous. There was a clear obligation on the Queensland government to pay compensation because these are Queensland waters being closed by the Queensland government. There will soon be the declaration of the Great Sandy Marine Park which is likely to have some impacts on commercial fishermen. There is also a review of the Moreton Bay Marine Park looming on the horizon. In the Moreton Bay area the Australian Marine Conservation Society has launched a campaign to have at least 30 per cent to 50 per cent of Moreton Bay within reserves, in other words, closed to commercial and recreational fishing families. The Beattie Labor government has been very quiet about the call from the AMCS, and it certainly has a track record of shutting down fishing in Moreton Bay with closures introduced supposedly to protect grey nurse sharks. No doubt that was the deal with the extreme Greens again. Fishers were prepared to accept additional restrictions on bottom fishing and night fishing to protect grey nurse sharks when and where they were most active, but the Beattie Labor government decided to introduce a total ban, which was exactly what the extreme Greens wanted.

Time and time again the Beattie Labor government has shown it is not interested in common-sense conservation. Generally, it is the farmers, the timber workers, the commercial fishermen and the recreational fishermen who have borne the brunt of Labor's environmental extremism. It is now reaching the point where it is the mums, dads and kids who just want to occasionally throw in a line and go fishing or who want to ride a horse in our wonderful state forests who Labor is hurting. The key difference between the coalition and Labor is that the coalition is committed to common-sense conservation while Labor is interested only in pandering to loopy, left wing, extreme Greens to get preferences at elections.

There are a number of points in this legislation that I want to address. In doing that, I want to speak about the Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Regulations which are directly linked to this legislation. That amending legislation addressed the issues of property rights and licence fees. We did not oppose those regulations because of the issue of property rights. I give credit where it is due. The development of the principles of property rights is very good and is something that the fishing industry has wanted for some time. Following on from property rights, we see in this bill some issues of compensation, but it is a matter of where the compensation is paid and where it is not. I will get to that later on during this particular debate.

Returning to the issue of property rights, at the time that those regulations were brought in, there was a very significant fee increase. That was opposed by the commercial industry. The fee was to be increased from one per cent of GVP to two per cent of GVP. That was proposed to take the fees and licensing charges from \$3 million up to \$6 million—\$3 million being one per cent of approximately \$300 million. Now it is being phased in over five years because of the financial hardship that the introduction of that increase would have caused. It has been pointed out to me that that system is rights based and people pay on quota or in proportion to the quota units, or they pay on endorsement such as in the crabbing industry where they pay a flat fee. It is also based on property rights. That leads to the compensation issues that are involved in the legislation that we are looking at currently.

I know that other states have far higher licensing fees than we do. The state that is most similar to Queensland in terms of its fisheries and port structures is Western Australia. I believe that this is a service that has to be provided by government. We see it in many other industries. As I pointed out in my opening remarks, this industry has remarkable input into the domestic economy, the recreational and social issues of our state and the decentralisation of our state. It is an industry that is worthy of support because of all those benefits that it delivers back to the state.

When a government can provide \$11 million every year to sustain the IndyCar race, is it not worthwhile to use the same argument and say, 'The fishing industry has enduring value to all Queenslanders 365 days a year. Therefore, it is not just simply a matter of cost recovery—of recovering the approximately \$42 million it costs to run the Fisheries section of DPIF'? It is more important to work on

the principle that this is a first-class industry that is so important to our coastal and inland communities and to the social and physical health of Queenslanders and our economy. It is wrong in principle to run an argument that the industry needs to raise fees and licences to match the actual cost of running that department. I know the fees that are engendered will not amount to that. At the same time, if there is any move towards recovering the cost of running the Fisheries section, that is completely wrong. We have to look at this industry in the same way that the government looks at other industries. Look at the massive amounts that can be spent through the department of state development to try to start up other industries. Yet here we have one that is up and going and has been for generations and is one of the best industries in the state.

That is some background to the issue of compensation. Whilst the Queensland Seafood Industry Association is concerned about the virtual 100 per cent hike in licensing fees, levies and so forth, it was prepared to accept them over an extended period provided it has the property rights and security of access issues clarified and enshrined in legislation. We on this side of the House strongly believe in property rights for the fishing industry, just as we strongly believe in the recreational industry having security of access to areas where they wish to fish.

The recreational industry often gets forgotten when it comes to compensation and other issues. When areas get closed and there is talk of compensation, the compensation does not cover all cases, only some cases. There is no compensation for the recreational industry but they may get locked out from whole areas of the coast, for example, with complementary zoning. That can have an enormous effect on small business—that is, people who run fish and tackle shops and bait shops, those involved with boating and so forth. We need to bear in mind that there are 200,000 boats registered in Queensland. That gives an idea of the sheer size of the industry. There is no compensation for those people. They just have to drive further to take their kids fishing, or because they are locked out it is too difficult to go anywhere. We start on the path of destruction of a wonderful recreational industry.

I will go through the six issues that are dealt with in the bill. The first one that is dealt with is the shark control program. I think everybody in this House would support that program. I think that program has been in place for 40 years. In that time we have seen only one tragic loss—the recent one at Amity Point. It is quite amazing the way it has basically reduced the number of sharks. They have been able to feed offshore. They have not been hungry and have not had to come in looking for a feed closer in.

When my parents used to take me to the coast it was quite a regular thing to see a tiger shark or a grey nurse hauled onto the beach by the lifesavers. They would row out in a surfboat and try to shoot it with a .303 or hook it. Shark attacks were regular. The warning bells were heard regularly. There was rarely a time when we went to the beach when the bells would not ring. If they rang, everybody would have to come in. I can remember my mother standing on the shore signalling to me that there was a shark. I think it has made the great Australian pastime of going to the beach immeasurably safer and it is something worthwhile protecting. A shark attack is a violent and dreadful thing. We certainly support the issues which clarify the functions of the chief executive in this regard. The types of weapons they can use and the way they can operate will be outlined in a government contract. We certainly support that provision.

The second part of this bill relates to compensation. The minister states in his second reading speech that it is proposed to amend the act to clarify the state's liability for compensation where changes are made to fisheries management arrangements by amendments to subordinate legislation. The thing that is unclear at present is whether compensation is payable where fishery management arrangements are set out under the Fisheries Regulation 1995 rather than in a specific plan. In the case of a management plan, compensation is payable in the terms provided in that particular plan.

The bill recognises that persons are eligible to claim for compensation if their fishing rights are diminished or removed for the purposes of giving those rights to a non-commercial sector or to protect marine life other than that managed under the act. Under this bill, compensation will be paid where there is a reallocation from a commercial to a non-commercial entity based on the market value of the licence at that time. The other reason for compensation is when an area is closed to fishing to protect something that is not a fish in terms of fish that are managed by DPIF. That might be, for example, dugong.

For marine parks and complementary zones there is no compensation. That is the point we have to be clear about. There is compensation in certain instances, those being where there is a reallocation of an area and when an area is closed to protect something that is not a fish, but there is no compensation when there is a declaration of a marine park, complementary zones and so forth. I have spoken previously about all those people who lost their rights to fish in those complementary zone areas—for example, the coral reef fishery—and did not receive any compensation whatsoever. The amount of compensation is something I want to look at during the consideration in detail stage of the bill. It is based on the market value of the business and the expected loss of gross income over a three-year period.

We need some clarification about an additional amount on top of the market value. I understand that there will be an amount of 20 per cent added to the market value. I want to be absolutely certain that is

enshrined in the legislation. A formula has been used at Port Phillip Bay in Victoria. It was successful. I understand that our formula will be based upon that.

As I have said, we support the fact that this compensation is being provided. But it is compensation that is limited to certain circumstances. There are other recreational fishers to whom fishing means a great deal and who will not receive compensation, just inconvenience and denial of their right to go fishing when many of these changes are brought in.

In this bill there are amendments relating to new fees and the licensing regime. This is something that we support. The property rights arrangement means that fees will be paid in arrears. That sees the need for a different system of processing. If fees are not paid, what will happen? It addresses that issue. Once again we support that provision. For example, when the debt is paid, the authority will be restored, and that all makes sense.

The fourth thing that this bill amends is the arrangements for the release of information where management plans are to be developed or amended. The feeling in the fishing industry has been that when a draft plan is released it is a fait accompli—that that is the way the government is going to go. The whole debate then gets off on the wrong foot because people in the industry feel that the government has made up its mind. I think it is a good idea to change these arrangements and change the way the process is done. There will still be a regulatory impact statement, but it should make the process between the industry and the government far more cooperative and more like a partnership.

There are also amendments to do with the temporary transfer of fishery quotas, and this makes sense. For example, late in the season when there can be the need for a transfer, it is stupid not to allow it if there is only a small transfer to be done. If there can be a practical transfer of a quota to somebody else, it makes a lot more sense.

The final amendment is to pick up the fisheries management changes at the Commonwealth level. Under the Offshore Constitutional Settlement, there has not been an ability for variations, and mistakes can be made. There was a mistake with one variety of fish—from memory, it was a form of mackerel but I am not sure—and it could not be varied. So, instead of the absolute, formal, never-change arrangements between the Commonwealth and the states, this will allow a variation to be undertaken if it is needed.

There are some real issues other than the ones that I have spoken about that confront fishing people at the moment. One of them is fuel. For many people involved in the trawling industry, for example, their fuel bills have gone up by 80 per cent in the past two years. It is a massive increase and they use large amounts of fuel.

I am critical of what the federal government is doing at the moment with the Energy Grants (Credit) Scheme, and I have written to the Treasurer and National Party senators. These trawling people are battling with this massive increase in their fuel costs, and this scheme means that, instead of being able to get accounts and pay for their fuel at 30 days, 60 days or whatever, they have to pay up-front. The cash flow effect of that, on top of an 80 per cent hike in fuel, is massive. Many of these people are hanging on by their fingernails. They have suffered, as I have said, from the RAP zones, the state government closures, reductions, zoning and so forth, and their 80 per cent hike in fuel. So it is coming at them from every direction. I call on the federal government to look at this issue in the Energy Grants (Credit) Scheme so that these people can continue to get the credit straightaway; that should be retained. It is just too big a financial burden to bear, particularly at this time with fuel up by 80 per cent.

Queensland has some of the best fish and we have a massive coastline, but I think it is a real shame that we can hardly get coral trout on a table in Queensland. Since the reduction in the coral trout quotas and the fact that much of that coral trout is exported live, here we are in Queensland eating something like 70,000 tonnes of catfish from the Mekong Delta. That is the largest amount of fish that is brought into Queensland. We have beautiful fish on our own shores and sustainable fisheries, yet we have gone too far with some of the quotas and restrictions and, as a result, Queenslanders are not able to have their own beautiful coral trout on their table at a reasonable price.

Mr Hopper: And the vannamei prawns.

Mr HORAN: We have seen a similar thing in the prawning industry. We have to start to look at ways in which, as I said at the outset, we have practicality and common sense and our families have reasonable access to fishing. Our fishing system needs to provide Queenslanders with the benefit of the beautiful fish we have on our coast, whilst at the same time being sustainable. As I said, I have seen figures that would absolutely amaze people of the relatively minuscule amount of fish that are harvested per hectare across the Barrier Reef, compared with the far higher amounts of what can be harvested per hectare that are seen as world's best practice.

I want to reiterate that, whilst we are addressing some issues of compensation here, there is an enormous blow to the recreational industry when areas are closed off and zones are introduced and they are forced to go elsewhere to fish. The other thing to remember is that, once areas are taken away, these

people are forced into a smaller area and are concentrated in a far smaller area. Surely it make more sense to keep areas open and talk to the recreational people about slot limits, rotational closures, seasonal closures and so forth that they know will work and spread the recreational effort over a wider area, rather than concentrating them all in smaller and smaller areas. These areas are being closed down by a plan that is driven not by science and pragmatism but by a culture of bending over backwards to satisfy the extreme Greens and to get preferences at the next election.

The private vessel levy on fishing families in Queensland provides considerable income to this state. There are 200,000 boats in Queensland and they are levied at \$15 per boat. What do they get in return for that? What benefits do they get from the money that comes out of their pockets? I think the recreational fishing industry would be far better served if that money was returned to the recreational fishers in the form of some decent service, such as the provision of areas where they can fish, the provision of some facilities but, more importantly, the provision of secure accessibility to areas.

The final thing I want to talk about is the rules and regulations relating to fish scraps and the filleting of fish. I understand that one of the reasons for the tragic attack at Amity was this system of filleting the fish onshore and then disposing of the scraps in the bins, which then attracts flies and maggots, or throwing them inshore which attracts sharks. It is probably another example of the partnership that needs to be developed with sectors of the recreational fishing industry and the commercial fishing industry so that the rules of what size fish you can take and so forth are still abided by, as well as the more sensible practices of filleting and slicing the fish on the boat and putting the scraps out to sea where they will not cause these problems.

As I have indicated, the coalition will support this bill. We believe those six points in the bill are sensible. I do have a number of questions to ask during the committee stage on some of the detail in the clauses, but this debate at the moment is more of a general nature.

I want to finish with the fact that the fishing industry is extremely important to Queensland. I want to reiterate that I have never seen an industry that has taken such a hammering as this industry. It has caused heartache and concern to commercial fishing families, recreational fishing families and those involved in aquaculture. I note the treatment that some of them have received from the EPA and I note the concern felt by those in the tourism fishing industry in regard to what has happened there with the closures.

I do not criticise just the state government. Although the Commonwealth government set up a compensation scheme, fishing people were hurt by the RAP zones that were put in place. All fishing families want to see sustainability. They all want to see the Great Barrier Reef protected. In rough terms, 30 per cent of the Barrier Reef was covered by the RAP zones and 70 per cent of the fishing was taken. Many fishing families believe that they entered into the process in an honest, up-front way and said, 'This is where we catch our fish.' Then they saw lines drawn around those areas and they were excluded from those zones.

When the state government introduced complementary zones, many fishing people just shook their heads in disbelief. In many cases, the fishing areas that they were left with north of Cairns were open to the south-east breeze and virtually no fish could be caught there. That is why I keep talking about the need to have practical, common-sense systems. We need to listen to what the fishing people have to say so that we can bring in systems that enable sustainability and achieve a win-win for the environment and for the fishermen.

The opposition will certainly be looking at some of these issues as we move through the year. The opposition will be supporting this bill, but I hope that the government notes those matters that I raised today.