



Speech by

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RECREATIONAL FISHERS

Mr KNUTH (Charters Towers—NPA) (10.03 pm): I rise here tonight to speak on behalf of the recreational fishers in the north of our state and condemn the Queensland government's handling of our recreational fishing industry. The recreational fishing industry has become so overregulated and underfunded that many fishers are questioning why they pay for boat and trailer registrations other than to finance the government's bureaucratic policing of the industry. For example, the greater Townsville district alone hands the state government a few million dollars a year through boat and trailer registration fees, and what has it seen in return? Virtually nothing has been done to improve parking facilities or widen current boat ramps for at least 10 years. Recreational fishers have to contend with overcongested ramps, often with no means of parking, and many are being forced to park illegally. What do recreational fishers receive in return for registering their boats? They are not even covered by third-party insurance in the event of an accident on the water,

Queensland fishers are now coming under review in the form of more regulations of the inshore fin fishery. North Queenslanders are not happy and have spoken out at one of the so-called consultancy meetings. People are saying the industry is so besieged by regulations that many recreational fishers are gripped by fear when they see an approaching Marine Parks or DPIF vessel. That is simply because it has come to the point at which people need a masters in law to know if they are committing some kind of offence or not. Fishers from my electorate are telling me it is hard enough for someone on the coast who fishes regularly to try to keep up with all these new regulations. However, for us westerners who come to the coast occasionally to fish with the family, it has become all too confusing.

The state Labor government claims that many of its new and past regulations have come about from its many consultancy meetings held to seek recreational fishers' views on the benefit and sustainability of the industry. However, these meetings have been receiving poor attendance from the majority of fishers due to a handful of the same self-interested individuals who coincidentally always seems to get the ear and the attention of the minister's advisers while anyone with a different view is simply ignored.

Fishers do not need any more regulations, and even a cutback on some of the ridiculous, unneeded and unworkable ones would be a move towards reason. What we are not seeing is a proactive approach to the industry by responsibly utilising boat and trailer fees and putting this money towards funding and implementation of the already successfully proven artificial reefs along our inshore coastline. Fishers are crying out for more all-tidal access points with quality four-bay boat ramps, toilets, wash-down areas, security cameras and better parking facilities. This has all been shrouded in a more commonsense approach to the whole industry.

Equally, reef fishers are sick of the continual barrage of new regulations hitting them on a yearly basis with three nine-day closures, bag limits and the stupidity of having to mutilate their catch by removing pectoral fins. Considering that the only time fishers can get out to a reef is if weather conditions are favourable, which according to DPI figures is four times a year, I question the need for any regulations at all. After four failed attempts, I got out to the John Brewer Reef and could not believe the abundance of the popular targeted species that I saw. Fishers do not need Reef more regulation, just a fair go and common sense.