



Speech by

Ted Sorensen

MEMBER FOR HERVEY BAY

Hansard Thursday, 6 August 2009

APPROPRIATION BILLS: ESTIMATES COMMITTEE E

Mr SORENSEN (Hervey Bay—LNP) (12.03 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the report of Estimates Committee E. I refer to the question asked by the member for Condamine, Mr Hopper, of the primary industries minister, Mr Mulherin, about the fishing regulations.

The recreational fishing industry is a very important part of tourism in Queensland, and especially in Hervey Bay. It is equally important to the economy. The changes to the recreational charter fishing rules have started to bite many fishing families who have come to Hervey Bay every year for the winter whiting fishing season and their holidays. No-one has a problem with the 50 fish bag limit, but what is confusing are the in-possession laws. They count the fish that are in one's freezer at home or, in the tourist's case, in their freezers at the caravan park.

Before the changes on 1 March 2009 there was no legal size or bag limits on winter whiting. With the new regulations there are no changes to size but the winter whiting bag limit is 50. For people in this chamber who are not fishermen I point out that a large winter whiting is about 23 centimetres long. They are very popular in Hervey Bay.

Over the past few months I have had a steady stream of angry anglers through my office complaining about the in-possession laws and being fined \$400 for the fish they have had in their freezer—fish that they caught the previous days, previous weeks and, in some cases, the previous month.

I had two elderly couples come in to see me who were very upset. Before they came to Hervey Bay they rang the fisheries department and were told about the bag limit but not the in-possession rules. They also went to the trouble to obtain a brochure *Changes to the recreation and charter fishing rules*. There was nothing in the brochure referring to the in-possession rules.

Both these couples were followed by the inspectors from the boat ramp to the caravan park and watched until they started to clean their catch. They were then approached by the fisheries inspectors and told that they wanted to go through their freezers. Both of the couples were fined \$400. In one case, the combined number of winter whiting just caught and in their freezer was 62 over the limit.

I find the in-possession laws unacceptable and ask for them to be revisited as soon as possible. I wish to read the following letter, which was signed by 24 visitors from Victoria to our area. It states—

As visitors from interstate we have enjoyed our annual stay of 2-3 months at Hervey Bay, particularly the fishing. Many of us transport our boats besides our caravans up to three thousand kilometers. We were amazed to find the new regulations only allowed us to possess fifty whiting in total.

As a result of this change to the previous situation many of us are now seriously considering not returning to Hervey Bay and Queensland in future years. We support the bag limit of fifty fish per day and would even suggest a boat limit of one hundred and fifty fish. In South Australia the boat limit is three times the bag limit. We need to store our catch for home use and so the fifty possession regulation is an extremely limiting factor and we believe unreasonable.

Our vessels are mainly tinnies only allowing us to fish close to the shore. We all abide by the regulations of marine safety and we only fish in the daylight.

In the media recently we were pleased to hear that there was to be further consultation regarding the new regulations and we trust that this letter will be considered in the consultation process.

That letter was signed by 24 people who were staying at the Beachfront Tourist Park at Pialba. This is just one of the caravan parks in Hervey Bay. We have a fair idea of how many people come to Queensland just to go fishing.

I think we have to look at this situation. We should not drive the tourists away from our tourist areas in Queensland when they come here to go fishing. It is such an important part of the economy. It fills up the caravan parks. A lot of these tourists have actually bought boats in Queensland and store them in Queensland. I believe that we need to have a look at the situation.

(Time expired)