



Speech by

**Hon. Tim Mulherin**

**MEMBER FOR MACKAY**

Hansard Friday, 19 June 2009

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## **MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

### **Coral Reef Fin Fish, Fishing Closures**

**Hon. TS MULHERIN** (Mackay—ALP) (Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland) (9.42 am): I have good news for recreational and commercial fishers. We have overhauled the dates for fishing closures which allow coral reef fin fish to spawn. There will now be two five-day closures a year instead of three nine-day closures. Today I am releasing closure dates for the next five years to give everyone certainty and allow for long-term planning. Significantly, there are no more December closures, which means that there will be no bans over the Christmas holiday period. Fewer closures for shorter periods will also minimise the economic impacts on commercial fishers and charter boat operators.

Importantly, fishing under these changes will still be sustainable. Closures will now be in October and November, which have been found to be the months of high effectiveness for protecting coral reef fin fish. The closure dates are based on the phases of the new moon when coral trout and many other reef species aggregate to spawn. At this time they are more susceptible to fishing and need some protection. This new regime follows a comprehensive review, which included recommendations from the Reef Management Advisory Committee and an expert based risk assessment conducted in May 2009.

Eligible offshore charter operators will be able to apply for a general fisheries permit to operate during the closure periods. Another concession is that commercial operators will be allowed to possess coral reef fin fish until 6 am on the first day of each closure period. The closures apply to waters on Queensland's east coast between Cape York and just north of Waddy Point on Fraser Island, extending to the eastern boundary of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park but not extending to the Coral Sea.

These changes fit the Q2 ambitions of strong and green—strong in that the closures assist the economy by minimising the impact on our important fishing industry and tourism industry, and green in that the closures protect our environment by providing these species with some breathing space in which to spawn.