




Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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GLADSTONE REGION, FISH HEALTH

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (3.51 pm): The fisheries minister's response in the House this week that the Gladstone Harbour problems can be explained away mainly as stressed-out barramundi is laughable, a disgrace and an abuse of science. The government has displayed tardiness, gross incompetence and negligence on the issue. This tired old government has been sitting on the facts for months and doing very little to protect fishermen, their livelihoods and health, other small marine-dependent businesses, recreational fishers, the fish stocks and other marine life in the Gladstone area. And now this long-term Labor government is engaging in what appears to be a cover-up, hiding as much as possible from the public and pre-empting its own independent scientific panel before it even brings down any findings. Stressed-out barramundi does not explain 35 sick fishermen who are working in some form or another with diseased fish. Stressed-out barramundi does not explain why fish catch levels as high as 80 per cent are diseased. Stressed-out barramundi does not explain the conflict in water-quality data originating from both government and non-government scientific sources. Stressed-out barramundi does not explain why salmon, shark and other species that have been caught are suffering from the same disease.

The minister says that large numbers of barramundi flushed into the harbour have become stressed and that this has caused the sickness, but how does that explain the saltwater species of fish and shark that did not originate upriver and that are similarly diseased? These fish were already in the harbour and were not flushed into the harbour by the floodwaters, yet they have the same condition. In the minister's gaga land of pseudoscience and political spin, maybe he thinks the stress of the barramundi is passed on to the salmon and shark through some kind of stressed-out syndrome. This is clearly ludicrous and the minister should be removed from the process immediately before he destroys the good name of science and the local seafood industry entirely.