




Speech by

Mark Ryan

MEMBER FOR MORAYFIELD

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND OTHER ACTS AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr RYAN** (Morayfield—ALP) (5.44 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Environmental Protection and Other Acts Amendment Bill. Like the member for Sandgate's marvellous and, importantly, factually accurate contribution, I, too, will use my contribution to inject some facts into this debate—something which I have noticed members of the opposition have been struggling to do this afternoon. Among other things, this bill supports the Queensland government's environmental offsets policy and the specific-issue policies for environmental offsets such as the unavoidable loss of fish habitat to development or other works. One of these policies is the Mitigation and Compensation for Works or Activities Causing Marine Fish Habitat Loss policy, which was published by Fisheries Queensland in 2002. My contribution to this debate this afternoon will focus on this specific aspect of the bill.

It goes without saying that fish habitats are essential to the support of our state's fisheries and extend to the land, waters and plants associated with the life cycle of fish and other marine life. Quite clearly, these environmental offset policies protect and support key fish habitats in Queensland and, accordingly, these offset policies protect and support recreational, commercial and Indigenous fishing for Queenslanders. Further, if we did not support and protect fish habitats we would put at risk the processes of spawning, sheltering and feeding for finfish, prawns, crabs, squid, oysters and scallops. This would be a devastating result for current and future generations of recreational, commercial and Indigenous fishers. The offset policy has been an important tool to help address the residual impacts that result from approval of coastal development and ensures that the unavoidable impacts that cannot be mitigated through revised design, relocation and best practice are addressed through environmental offsets. Offsets have been an integral part of the coast development assessment and approval process for many years.

As honourable members may be aware, the offsets must be appropriate to the extent and nature of the impacts of the development and may include things like habitat exchange, signage, extension and educational materials, rehabilitation of degraded habitats, fishing facilities, or funding for fish habitat research, and over time we can point to many examples of successful fish habitat offsets in Queensland. We have seen fish habitats being donated to the state for declaration within fish habitat areas or within environmental reserves managed by local governments. So here we see the offset principle protecting fish habitats for current and future generations. But we have also seen the establishment of an honours scholarship program at the University of Queensland, James Cook University and Central Queensland University using funds obtained from fish habitat offsets. I understand that to date all students who participated in this program have earned first-class honours—a marvellous achievement. So here we see again the offset principle investing in fish habitat research and best practice for current and future generations. Further, we have seen the construction of boardwalks, fishing platforms, public boat ramps and signage, and the production of extension materials which highlight the values of fish habitats. Again we see the offset principle improving access to fish habitats for current and future generations. There is no doubt that recreational and commercial fishing along Queensland's coast are key economic activities that support coastal communities and respectively provide important lifestyle, tourism and export opportunities.

It is policies such as this that support the ongoing protection of fish habitat for not only common species but important rare and endangered species that can mean the difference between survival and extinction. Mr Deputy Speaker, you might be very interested to hear, and I think you should really listen to this, that one of those species that may benefit from the protection of fish habitat under this offset policy could in fact be the species of fish called the jack dempsey. Whilst not a native to Queensland—

Honourable members interjected.

Mr RYAN: It is a real fish. It is a real fish, the jack dempsey.

Mrs Sullivan: A shark, is he?

Mr RYAN: No, it is a real fish. There is a real fish called a jack dempsey, so there you go, that is very interesting. Whilst not a native to Queensland, this exotic fish species is known to prefer caves and nooks to hide in when kept in an aquarium; and in the wild, it can be found in muddy canals, swamps and drainage ditches, as it appreciates the slow moving murky water. Maybe that is where the shadow opposition spokesman is now—in those slow moving murky waters. I just imagine the murky waters of the LNP would be the ideal habitat for a jack dempsey. The jack dempsey thrives on a diet of crustaceans, insects—

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Powell): Member for Morayfield, I remind you to refer to members by their correct title, please.

Mr RYAN: It is a real fish. It is a fish called the jack dempsey. It is not the member for Bundaberg, it is a real fish.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Member for Morayfield, be careful in your distinction of the two, please.

Mr RYAN: The jack dempsey thrives on a diet of crustaceans, insects, worms, frogs, shrimps and other smaller fish. I can only imagine who is next on the menu for our Jack Dempsey. Fortunately, the jack dempsey fish population in Australia is considered a feral species and the population is in decline. This means that there is no offset requirement for the destruction of its habitat, but like their political counterparts the jack dempsey fish species are very adept at destroying each other and their own respective habitats.

The new arrangements introduced by this bill will ensure native species will have their habitat protected now and into the future. This is good news for the people of the Morayfield state electorate, especially the members of the mighty Morayfield Eels Fishing Club. They are good people and they love their fishing and I say hello to them tonight. This is good news also for Queensland's fishing and environment communities. This is good policy for the Queensland of today and the Queensland of tomorrow. I take this opportunity to commend the minister, her staff and the departmental staff on getting this bill before the House. I also commend the bill to the House and encourage all members to support it.