




Speech by
Bill Byrne

MEMBER FOR ROCKHAMPTON

Hansard Tuesday, 27 November 2012

FISHING INDUSTRY

 **Mr BYRNE** (Rockhampton—ALP) (12.34 am): Some within this parliament are aware that I have been a keen recreational fisher for most of my life. I have been fishing estuarine and inshore waters since I was a small child and I have developed very strong personal views on the state of Queensland fisheries. I have various concerns about the misinformation that is being put to the public. It is in that vein that I wish to draw the attention of House to a particular matter associated with Queensland Fisheries management. The Newman government promised that if it was elected it would increase recreational fishing opportunities and invest in and enhance fisheries monitoring on a regional basis, but almost immediately after being elected the LNP set about withdrawing funding from key programs and initiatives that provide great benefit to recreational fishing and monitoring. One of the most unfathomable cuts was to the universally acclaimed Suntag fish-tagging program that has operated in Queensland as a collaboration between the Australian National Sportfishing Association Queensland and Fisheries for the past 25 years. This program is the largest recreationally managed tagging program in the world.

Data from the tagging program is highly sought after by Fisheries managers and researchers alike because it extends over such a long period and the quality and reliability of the data is high. This data is not available from any other source. Successive Labor governments have recognised the importance of supporting the Suntag program to ensure its ongoing success and provided annual grants. This assistance does not entirely fund the program but provide sufficient assistance to ensure the administration management costs were given some certainty. The recent level of funding support was around \$50,000 a year. This is a very small amount in the context of the value that the Suntag program provides. The program was founded on the passion and voluntary time willingly given by thousands of the state's most dedicated recreational fishermen. If government or research bodies had to fund the full cost of such an extensive program, the annual bill would be in the millions of dollars. The small government investment required to deliver such an important state-wide fisheries monitoring program should never be the subject of government razor gangs. I call on this government to recognise and be proud of Queensland's own best practice Suntag program and guarantee ongoing funding. It is insulting to require such a proven monitoring program to annually justify itself and plead for the relatively tiny amount of government funding needed to support the program.

This government promised the people of Queensland that it would invest in fisheries monitoring on a regional basis. There is no better investment than a pledge for ongoing support to the Suntag monitoring program, which is already established and which has a 25-year database with records of over 600,000 tagged fish. I draw the minister's attention to this matter and ask that he look at reinstating or reinstating that funding program.