



Speech by


**Liz Cunningham**

**MEMBER FOR GLADSTONE**

Hansard Thursday, 17 May 2012

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## **SUBCONTRACTORS, PAYMENTS; GLADSTONE HARBOUR, COMMERCIAL FISHING**

 **Mrs CUNNINGHAM** (Gladstone—Ind) (1.09 am): Earlier this morning I raised in this chamber the plight that is faced by at least 90 families in my electorate in relation to unpaid subcontractor payments. I thank the several ministers who are cooperating in trying to find a solution to this issue. Those families are already facing significant increases in costs of living without the opposite problem of getting no income from a major contractor to a GOC. Another sector in my electorate that is suffering because of a lack of income are the commercial fishermen. Recreational fishers have seen their opportunity to fish in the Gladstone Harbour diminish almost totally. Commercial fishing was carried out in the harbour, as was prawning and scalloping. We have indeed had a scallop market that was of export quality. We now have quite a number of commercial fishermen who have not had adequate or any income in some instances for over 12 months.

When the port authority first proposed the dredging it was acknowledged that the dredging would have a significant impact on the fishing grounds of commercial fishers at the top end of the harbour. It was stated in the EIS documentation that they would be compensated. None of that compensation has been forthcoming to date. Out of desperation the fishermen established a fighting fund and they currently have a case on foot. They did that not because they wanted to be litigious but because they felt they had no other option. I was hoping that the new government would be able to address the issue of compensation. Indeed, there are a number of commercial fishermen who have gone out of the fishing industry altogether, not because they do not like it—they love it—but because they had no option. One who lives down the road from me had to sell his home. He now fishes out of another port and he and his family have to live at distance.

What I am asking is for the government to reconsider its treatment of the fishing industry. I understand that there is a challenge because of the case on foot, but there are other issues in the commercial fishing industry where the government, on the basis of compassion and genuine need, should be stepping in and assisting these fishermen in their financial distress. One such fishing family, the Ottos, had a full catch that was sent to the Sydney markets refused from sale because Safe Food Queensland and Raptis, who are the delegates down in Sydney that were going to sell at the market, said that the reputation of the fish out of the harbour and the condition of the fish made it unsaleable. That came at a huge cost to this family. I implore the government to look at this need, to look at the people who are involved and to give them financial assistance.