




Speech By
Brittany Lauga

MEMBER FOR KEPPEL

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2015

FISHERIES AND ANOTHER REGULATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (8.55 pm): I rise this evening to speak against this disallowance motion. Fishing is a part of my family's history. It is in our blood. My grandmother Mary loved fishing and she taught me to fish when I was a little girl. We did not have a boat so together we would sit on the beach, both with a line in the water, and she would tell me to talk quietly otherwise I would scare off the fish. She also told me about the importance of ensuring we have sustainable fisheries and to never take more than you need. My father-in-law, Rodney Lauga, tells me his dad taught him about the importance of sustainable fishing and, in turn, Rodney raised my husband, Wayne, with the same ideals.

In the past, when Rodney, Wayne and I have been out in Coorooman Creek with a few pots out, and we have pulled the pot up, if we get a big buck which has not yet filled into its shell—a floater, as we call it—I have always been taught that he must go back in the water for someone else to catch at a later date when he has filled in his shell. The proposed net-free zones have been discussed over the family dinner table and whilst out on the water—although the opportunities for that are few and far between in this job. Rodney believes that the net-free zones are a good thing, because if we are taking too many fish we will see a decline in stocks and that will affect everyone now and in future generations.

Some in Keppel would argue that stocks are already in decline and that it is becoming more and more difficult to catch a fish. I recall the story told to me about a television fishing show being encouraged to film a day fishing for barra in the Fitzroy River. The celebrity fishermen fished in the river for an entire day and did not catch a thing. Of course, good fishing television relies on actually catching something and unfortunately, despite being encouraged back to the Fitzroy for a second day of fishing, the celebrity fishermen were still not able to hook up. The reputational damage that this would have caused for our local area's fishing tourism must have been disastrous.

The argument that local people will no longer be able to source fresh local fish is false. I read with interest the representations made by Mr Kim Martin in the committee's examination of the regulation amendment that, of 44 seafood retailers, restaurants, hotels, clubs, fish-and-chip shops and supermarkets across the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast area, only one fish-and-chip shop and one restaurant definitely had fish—in both cases barramundi—that had been caught by commercial net fishers in Central Queensland waters. The data shows that fish-and-chip shops predominantly sell Spanish mackerel and reef fish, which are both commercially line-caught species and will not be impacted in any way at all by the proposed net-free areas. Other species sold in many fish-and-chip shops are currently imported from wild fisheries and fish farms outside Australia. Only net fishing is prevented in the new net-free zones. Crabbing, line fishing and trawling is still allowed. This means that there will be no impact—no impact, Mr Speaker—on the local supply of prawns, crabs, reef fish and many pelagic fish at our local fish markets, restaurants, clubs, pubs and fish and chip shops. This policy

will increase fish stocks for recreational anglers and it offers a clear and fair exit strategy for licence holders. Recreational fishers will still be allowed to use cast nets. However, as is currently the case, these nets must be lawful and comply with the current length and mesh size restrictions.

The Fitzroy River has the capacity to be the largest wild barramundi fishery in the world and I look forward to encouraging visitors from around the world to experience the thrill of having a barra on the end of their line. The prospect of the largest wild barramundi fishery on the doorstep of Rockhampton and the Capricorn Coast, not to mention on the doorstep of the Great Barrier Reef, is a vision I and many others in my electorate look forward to becoming a reality.

Fishing tourism has an exciting future in Central Queensland from 1 November 2015. This policy is about creating additional economic benefits by recognising the total value of spending by recreational fishers and taking advantage of the potential for fishing based tourism. Central Queensland potentially has some of the best fishing experiences in Australia adjacent to Rockhampton, the Capricorn Coast and, of course, the Great Barrier Reef. This combination is a powerful tourism attraction and deserves development. The implementation of net-free zones will create certainty for all sectors encouraging investment. Tourism based fishing businesses and recreational fishers will have defined areas to underpin their renewed support and growth. As reported by Rockhampton Regional Council Mayor Margaret Strelow to the committee's inquiry, this policy is estimated to have a direct economic benefit of \$22 million to the Rockhampton region. Net-free zones will underpin economic growth in the recreational and charter fishing sectors. Another \$14 million or so is anticipated in flow-on economic benefits to related businesses such as tackle shops and caravan parks.

The government considered feedback from more than 6,300 public submissions received during the recent consultation process. Ninety per cent of the submissions were in favour of introducing net-free zones. Recently I met with several commercial fishers and I understand their concerns about the introduction of net-free zones, but reform is an election commitment and we are seeing it through. Furthermore, the government has set aside \$10 million to help commercial net fishers adjust to the introduction of the three zones and will be using some of that money to buy back licences from fishers who want to transition out of the industry.

I agree with my father-in-law Rodney: we must ensure that there is fresh fish to catch now and into the future for our kids. I want to ensure that there is fresh fish for everyone to catch, especially so that our future generations have a healthy sustainable fishery and can also experience the thrill of catching their own fresh barra in our mighty Fitzroy River and Keppel Bay.