




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR IPSWICH

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FISHERIES AND ANOTHER REGULATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Ms HOWARD** (Ipswich—ALP) (7.54 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion. For decades, the use of commercial fishing nets has caused conflict between Queensland's commercial and recreational fishers. Despite what the member for Nanango thinks, there is no middle ground on this issue. This is a matter with important ramifications for the sustainability of our fisheries, for tourism, for our environment and for economic growth, and it is time to take action. Over the years, there has been a lot of discussion about how to resolve this conflict but very little has been done to address it. It is time to grab the bull by the horns and with this regulation that is what this government has done.

In opposition, Labor committed to net-free zones as part of a package of election commitments to improve fishing in Queensland. The sustainable fishing policy committed to implementing three net-free zones—one in Cairns, one near Mackay and one along the Capricorn Coast taking in Rockhampton and Yeppoon. The regulation before the parliament delivers on this commitment. It delivers real and positive change. Importantly, it does so in a way that compensates the commercial fishing industry, with a payment for lost fishing grounds while also giving them the ability to sell their licence back to the government if they wish. This is why \$10 million was committed to finance the buyback and settlement schemes associated with the introduction of the three net-free zones. I stress that there is no compulsion involved. Commercial licence holders are entirely free to weigh up their options and make the decision that best suits their circumstances. Those who wish to stay in the industry will still be able to do so but must operate in other areas.

Some people oppose net-free zones on the misguided belief that there will be no local seafood for consumers. This is not correct. Commercial seafood harvest by nets from within the three zones accounts for just 0.1 per cent of Australia's total seafood production. That is just 0.1 per cent. The idea that these net-free zones will remove Australian seafood from our tables is absurd. The benefits of these net-free zones to recreational fishers—and hence to tourism and a range of local businesses in the regions concerned—are plain, not least to the recreational fishers themselves.

The recreational fishing group Keep Australia Fishing has called on the opposition leader and the shadow fisheries minister to withdraw the disallowance motion against the net-free zone legislation as a matter of priority. They have asked the LNP to withdraw this motion for the sake of recreational fishers and their families. They have asked them to withdraw it for the sake of healthy and abundant fish, clean and healthy waterways, and sustainable communities. But it appears such concerns do not register on the LNP's radar, and so here we are today. The Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance chair had this to say yesterday—

I cannot believe that the LNP have moved this motion of disallowance against your Net Free Areas commitment and have totally discarded letters of support from the likes of:

- the Queensland Tourism Industry Council;
- the Caravan Parks Association of Queensland;
- the Caravan Industry Association of Australia;
- the Tackle Industry of Queensland;
- the World Wildlife Fund;
- Australia Marine Conservation Society;
- Care Fish;
- Mackay Recreational Fishers Alliance;
- Fraser Coast Fishing Alliance;
- Queensland Amateur Fishing Clubs Association;
- Australia National Sports Fishing Association; and many other high profile endorsements.

It is important to remember that Queensland's wild fish stocks are a common-property natural resource; they belong to everyone. The challenge for any government is to balance the interests of a range of competing stakeholders, each with different objectives and needs, while ensuring that fish stocks remain sustainable and benefits to the whole community are maximised. Removing nets from these areas will help to protect these species and meet the government's commitment in the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan. The net effect of these measures will be a boon for the environment and a boom for regional tourism. But what we have seen from this lot opposite is a real disdain for the people of regional Queensland. Their opposition to net-free zones proves that the LNP cannot stand up for regional tourism or recreational fishing and they most certainly cannot stand up for the environment.

Cairns and Far North Environment Centre director Josh Coates had some choice words to say about the LNP's attempts to derail these net-free fishing zones. He said—

This is a cynical political move and is a huge snub to the many people who have worked for years to see this common sense approach to resource sharing and environmental protection in areas under significant environmental pressure.

From my involvement in the consultation process surrounding the net-free zones, I can confirm that Mr Coates is actually correct.

The government considered feedback from more than 6,300 public submissions received during the recent consultation process. As a result of all the feedback received throughout this process, there have been some adjustments to the boundaries originally proposed. At Seaforth the boundary of the zone has been amended slightly to align with the local dugong protection area. The boundary for the Capricorn Coast zone has also been altered to reduce the overall size of the area whilst still including the waters of Keppel Bay and the Fitzroy River. The government has listened throughout this extensive consultation and has taken all views into account. But the overall message from fishery stakeholders and the community on this issue is clear. During the consultation process 90 per cent of people were strongly in favour of the introduction of the zones. This overwhelmingly positive response has strengthened the government's resolve to fulfil our commitments by establishing these net-free zones.

The LNP recently released its own plan for creating net-free zones in Moreton Bay identical to plans the government has for the three zones that are the subject of this regulation. This disallowance motion just proves how hypocritical the LNP are on this matter. This motion is, indeed, a cynical political move from the LNP, as Mr Coates from the Cairns and Far North Environment Centre has observed.

In contrast to the opportunism and hypocrisy of the LNP, the Palaszczuk government is taking action to ensure our fisheries remain sustainable and benefit all Queenslanders. These new zones will be the first step in ensuring that Queensland takes advantage of the tourism potential of fishery resources. The zones will be good for tourism, good for the Great Barrier Reef and great for Queensland recreational fishing. I commend the regulations to the House.