




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 14 October 2015

FISHERIES AND ANOTHER REGULATION AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1)

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (9.07 pm): As a young boy who grew up in Brisbane, one of my fondest memories was of visiting my extended family in the electorate of the member for Burdekin at Home Hill and Ayr, which is where my grandparents lived. My grandfather would take me fishing at spots such as Barratta Creek, Saltwater Creek and Rocky Ponds and teach me how to throw a cast a net and rig my fishing tackle for a particular fish species, as well as teach me simple things such as patience. Back in those days, it was okay to take from the creeks whatever you caught, regardless of the size, quantity or even gender. For example, a jenny or female mud crab would be tied up and put in the sugarbag, later to be boiled in salt water and eaten for dinner that night. A barramundi could be caught all year round without size limits and without bag limits. This was before many members of the House were born, at a time when there was an abundance of fish in the seas and creeks and you were guaranteed to bring home a feed of fish for the family every time you went fishing. Since those days, we have had seasonal fishing where fish such as barramundi are off limits from midday on 1 November to midday on 1 February, allowing them to breed and replenish their stocks.

When I go fishing in the Great Barrier Reef I too must follow specific rules and regulations when fishing. These include no fishing in green zones, which are areas determined to be specific to support the habitat of fish stocks. The reef is also protected from fishing at various times of the year. In 2015 it is from 10 to 14 October and from 9 to 13 November. The former minister for agriculture, fisheries and forestry said that these closure dates coincided with the new moon when key coral fish species aggregate to spawn.

Finally, when I go fishing I adhere to bag limits. This limits the size and the number of fish species I am allow to catch and keep. On several occasions I have returned back to the boat ramp to find the fishing inspector or fishos waiting to check my catch. These fishos have seen it all and they know every hiding place in any boat and I can tell members that they are thorough in their work. I can safely say that I have never been in the possession of undersized fish or crabs, exceeded my bag limited or had jenny muddies at any time.

There are many members in this House who can probably tell similar stories—we heard one from the member for Logan—of them either being taken fishing by parents or grandparents or them taking their own children or possibly their grandchildren fishing. It is not rocket surgery that the justification and reasoning behind these actions by various governments over the last 40 to 50 years has been to protect fish habitats.

I can remember when the green zones were increased in size and number in 2002. The fishing public were outraged. Now, some 13 years later, the fishing public have accepted these changes and, in fact, many fishers support these moves and now see the importance of having zones off limits to

fishing and encourage fish habitats that support fish populations. If we were to allow fishers, both recreational and commercial, to take whatever they caught then the only fish that we would be seeing would be in museums or in picture books beside dinosaurs.

A government member interjected.

Mr STEWART: Absolutely. Fishing is part of the lifestyle of many Queenslanders and an important part of the Queensland experience for the state's many visitors. In fact, fishing and fishing charters form a component of the tourism industry in Queensland. We have heard today from the Premier and the minister that tourism contributes \$23 billion annually.

Queensland's fisheries resources are a common property resource—that is, they are not owned by any one sector and are owned by the Queensland community. In fact, the LNP member for Cleveland also agrees that we need net-free zones and proudly displays that on his Facebook page. I am happy to table a copy of that from his Facebook page. I applaud him for standing up for his values.

Tabled paper. Extract, undated, of Dr Mark Robinson MP's Facebook page, in relation to net-free zones [\[1395\]](#).

Therefore, it is the government's obligation to manage these precious resources under the principles of ecological sustainable development. We need to demonstrate not only that we are fishing sustainably but we are fishing responsibly and in ways that afford resilience for our natural systems. This regulation will boost tourism and give recreational fishers a greater opportunity to catch fish in regional Queensland like in the Barrattas, in Saltwater Creek and in Rocky Ponds alike. Therefore, I do not support this disallowance motion.