



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Furner**


**MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE**

---

Record of Proceedings, 3 May 2018

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT**

**White Spot Disease**

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.09 am): I rise to update the House on the Palaszczuk government's response to white spot disease in prawns. White spot disease has taken a sledgehammer to the seafood industry in the south-east corner, and the effects are being felt right along the supply chain. Three weeks ago our sampling and testing program in Moreton Bay confirmed the presence of a virus in several prawns caught in the waters off the Redcliffe peninsula. As part of the latest round of surveillance, prawn and crab samples were collected from 54 sites in Moreton Bay. Testing has returned positive results for nine of these sites. Five of these sites have been confirmed by the Australian Animal Health Laboratory and the remaining sites are still to be confirmed. All results will soon be available. It is important that we complete the testing from all sites before making any decisions on the future of our white spot disease strategy.

These positive results will place continuing pressure on commercial fishers and prawn farmers who operate within the white spot disease movement restriction area. That is why in late 2017 a working group was formed which includes representatives from the Queensland Seafood Industry Association, Moreton Bay Seafood Industry Association, Queensland Seafood Marketers Association and local commercial operators. The group has been working to combat the impact of white spot disease and implemented a very successful seafood confidence campaign over the recent Easter break to bolster support for our local seafood industry. I thank those industry leaders for taking a constructive position and working with government to address a common problem.

In addition, we have been conducting research into the use of gamma irradiation on bait prawns and soil sediment assessments on prawn farms. We are hoping to identify the minimal effective dose of gamma irradiation that will prevent infection in prawns. A reduced treatment dose would help the industry to continue trading uncooked prawns sourced from Moreton Bay. The soil assessment work will tell us how effective our destruction and decontamination activities have been and broaden our understanding of aquatic disease control and management.

The Palaszczuk government is committed to maintaining open communication with the seafood industry throughout the surveillance, sampling and testing process. We will continue to include industry in discussions about the future of white spot disease management moving forward. I encourage all Queenslanders to consume as much Queensland seafood as possible to support the industry.