




Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

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FISHERIES (SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES STRATEGY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (12.10 pm): I rise to make a contribution to the debate on the Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018, a bill, I note, that aims to modernise the objectives of the Fisheries Act 1994 to clarify the decision-making process and to strengthen compliant powers and penalties to address black marketing.

I state at the outset that I support the practical and common-sense amendments to this legislation that will be moved by the member for Gympie—amendments that, I might add, were drawn from the recommendations of the parliamentary committee, recommendations that have been completely disregarded by this minister. Does that not send a message to this parliament? Clearly when it comes to fishing the minister knows everything and he does not need to take advice from industry or his own parliamentary colleagues. That should be ringing alarm bells throughout Queensland. What a slap in the face to the members of the agricultural parliamentary committee who travelled throughout Queensland—as we heard from members on both sides of this parliament—consulting with commercial fishers, members of the public and industry to come up with a report that contained a number of important recommendations.

I also put on record my support for the commercial fishing industry and the hardworking operators who are out there day in, day out trying to make a living. It is no secret that in the past Queensland was home to a proud commercial fishing industry that supplied some of the world's highest quality seafood to homes and businesses throughout Australia and around the world. It is also no secret that under those opposite we have seen that industry reduced to a shadow of its former self. The unrelenting persecution and demonising of our commercial fishers under the Labor regime is nothing short of disgraceful. I have witnessed the decline of the industry over a number of years and I know how tough it is for our commercial fishing operators to meet the requirements of increasingly tough and bureaucratic legislation and regulation. There is no question that we need to balance commercial and recreational fishing with sustainability of the fishing resource, but when the pendulum swings too far one way, as we are witnessing now with VMS, something must break. This government's record on fishing is appalling. That is why, during the previous LNP government's tenure, the then minister for agriculture commissioned the MRAG report which contained a number of sensible and practical recommendations that involved consultation with the industry.

The implementation of the vessel monitoring system has been nothing short of a shambles. Just last week one of my commercial operators was ordered off the water because his unit had malfunctioned, costing him an estimated \$5,000 in lost income for the day. It is not good enough. The rollout of these units and associated compliance regime should be suspended until such time as a full and comprehensive review is conducted. Instead of taking the opportunity to work collaboratively to protect our environment, we just see more red tape. Instead of cracking down on illegal activity, we see law-abiding commercial fishers being forced to purchase dodgy equipment. Yes, forced, because this is equipment this government forced them to buy. To add insult to injury many commercial fishers have not even received their units despite ordering and paying for them months ago. If they have received

their units they are still at risk. If the unit is safe on their boats, and that is a big if, they have to hope the unit actually works. We do not believe that a law-abiding Queenslander should have their life and their liberties put at risk by a minister who values the rights of zealots more highly than the rights of Queenslanders.

I also want to highlight how important the intellectual property that these units capture is to commercial operators. As members would appreciate, commercial operators have fishing habitats and localities that are extraordinarily valuable to them. That intellectual property is potentially worth a considerable sum of money in certain quarters. In many cases this intellectual property has been built up over several decades and, as a consequence, stringent safeguards should be built into the legislation with this information protected at all costs. There is no question that the penalties for misusing or sharing this information unlawfully should attract the same significant penalties as a commercial fisher would receive for breaching VMS compliance.

Like all Queenslanders, commercial fishers want the seafood black market shut down. I first raised this issue with the previous agriculture minister because I saw what it was doing to the industry. It undermines and undervalues the commercial fishing industry and there is no question it needs to be shut down. Commerce fishers expend vast sums of money on boats, equipment and licences, and they deserve and warrant protection from black market operators who, until now, have operated with relative impunity. I note the amendment being put forward by the shadow minister will change the definition of commercial quantity from five times the recreational limit or weight equivalent to two times that limit and I fully support that amendment.

If I could move on to powers of entry and the blatant breach of an individual's basic rights and freedoms proposed in this bill, again we see this government bypassing the most basic rights to appease green groups. We see inspectors given the right to enter property without a warrant, just as we saw in the disastrous vegetation management laws introduced by this minister. There should be no entry rights to premises used for trade or commerce, or vehicles, without the owner's consent, a reasonable notice period or a warrant, which is exactly what our Queensland police officers do at the present time. To allow inspectors a right of entry without a warrant or reasonable notice is nothing short of an abuse of power and a gross breach of rights and I concur with the comments from the Queensland Law Society that such provisions should not infringe upon fundamental legal rights.

Like I have said many times in this place, those of us on this side of the House understand commercial fishers and the communities they support. Despite asking this government to consult with primary industry and regional Queensland time and time again, we again see key legislation put before this House without a regulatory impact statement. The lack of a RIS fails any test of good governance and goes to the arrogance of this government that it can introduce legislation into this place with no regard for due diligence or the potential impact on our commercial fishing industry.

It is not good enough that this government pays lip-service to real issues while wrapping Queensland's small businesses in red and green tape. It is not good enough that this minister botches the implementation of scheme after scheme, all the while destroying Queensland industries. Without the amendments proposed by the LNP, this legislation is not good enough to achieve the outcomes that Queensland needs while respecting the hard work and rights of our commercial fishers throughout our state. If we do not work with our seafood industry and support our commercial fishers, we will not be able to go down to the local fish and chip shop and buy good quality, locally caught seafood, we will not be able to eat fresh seafood at our favourite restaurant and we will not be throwing a locally caught prawn on the barbie. Instead of regulating our fishing operators out of the industry, why don't we work with them and take on board their knowledge and experience? After all, they are the professionals and it is their livelihoods that are under threat. We can make changes here today that will make the lives of our commercial fishers easier while sustaining our fishing resource. If those opposite, including the minister, were fair dinkum they would adopt the amendments proposed by the member for Gympie.