




Speech By
Julianne Gilbert

MEMBER FOR MACKAY

Record of Proceedings, 12 February 2019

FISHERIES (VESSEL TRACKING) AMENDMENT REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (5.57 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion. On this side of the House we think that our natural resources—our public resources—need to be managed in line with the best available technology. On our side of the House we believe that everything should be evidence based. That is what we form our policies on. That is why I am proud to support the sustainable fishing strategy. This will help build a legacy of a sustainable fishery for our children and grandchildren.

Vessel tracking is an important part of modern fisheries management. Vessel tracking provides critical information about how and where vessels are operating to the relevant authorities, giving our fisheries managers a much better understanding of the kinds of pressures being put on our resources. Vessel tracking provides critical information that helps to demonstrate the sustainability of the fishery, including for the purpose of operating in our World Heritage areas.

Vessel tracking provides greater integrity in ensuring that our commercial operators are doing the right thing while extracting private profit from a public resource. I note that vessel tracking is a significant change for many operators. I understand and appreciate that there is a section of the Queensland commercial fishing industry that is opposed to vessel tracking. Much of this opposition is ideological. However, the feedback from commercial fishers across the state has been incorporated into the vessel tracking guidelines.

A draft vessel tracking policy and operating guidelines, which describe the responsibilities and rules associated with the use of vessel tracking, were released for industry comment. Officers from Fisheries Queensland have met with over 280 fishers at 22 locations across the state to discuss the policy and guidelines.

Together with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, Fisheries Queensland has pooled up to \$3 million to assist industry with the implementation of vessel tracking. Rebates are available to assist industry in covering the purchase and installation costs of vessel tracking units. The rebate scheme is being administered by the Queensland Rural Industry Development Authority. The scheme commenced on 30 August 2018. All commercial fishing boats, harvest fishery and charter fishery licence holders will be able to apply for a rebate. All approved units purchased from 1 June 2018 will be eligible as long as they meet the rebate eligibility criteria.

The rebate scheme has been designed so that the majority of fishers should not be out of pocket for a unit purchased or the installation costs. Reimbursements of up to \$300 will be available for smaller units, while reimbursement of up to \$750 will be available for larger units. Reimbursements of up to \$220 will also be available to help with the installation costs. There will be no costs to the commercial fishers.

Change is rarely easy, even for worthwhile resources. Progress does not come easy without transition. Our government took a decision with the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and its funding package to provide a better fishery for Queenslanders now, for our children and for our grandchildren. Vessel tracking is an important step in reaching these goals.

I can remember when we implemented the net-free zones. When talking to commercial fishers, they thought the sky would fall in. I have a net-free zone in my area and I can report that the fish quality has improved out of this world. Fish do not just stay in the net-free zones. They do not know where the borders are. They swim out into areas where the commercial fishers are fishing. The number of dolphins and birdlife has improved, and we have more turtles nesting and breeding. The change that came about from having the net-free zones was actually a benefit for the commercial fishers.

Vessel tracking has been part of the trawl fishery for nearly two decades, as the member for Bancroft has alluded to. Vessel tracking for key fisheries was proposed in the MRAG consultants' report commissioned by the former government. The LNP received the report but did not release it. In fact, it was the incoming Labor government that took the decision to make this report public.

The reform was announced as a key measure of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy in June 2017. This reform is already in place with hundreds of units purchased, registered and in place. Individual information collected is used for internal fisheries management purposes and is shared only with the compliance partners—marine parks—under strict conditions. Real-time monitoring of commercial fishers will assist compliance officers to target fishers not following the rules—for example, using excessive gear, operating in a fishery that is not permitted under their licence, avoiding quota reporting. The information is already proving invaluable to our compliance officers in targeting people who are flouting the rules. This makes it better and easier for those who are doing the right thing.

We should be commending those fishers who are embracing the reform process and sustainability—supporting fisheries to benefit our children and grandchildren. It is our role to make sure that our fisheries resource is there for generations to come and also there for our recreational fishers. We need to leave the world a better place than we found it. I oppose the motion.