




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR MACKAY

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FISHERIES (SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES STRATEGY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mrs GILBERT** (Mackay—ALP) (4.06 pm): I rise to support the bill. Queensland is blessed with an abundance of seafood and it is important that this parliament takes steps to preserve this public resource now and for the future. Queensland deserves the best fisheries management system that is available. That is the case whether someone is a recreational fisher off Mackay or elsewhere up and down the coast of Queensland. Our fisheries are important to our state's tourism image, our regional and rural economic development, our exports abroad and also our plates at home. That is why our government has introduced this bill, which is a key milestone in the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. While many of these changes will not affect the ordinary fisher, they will allow much greater management of our natural resources.

This bill represents a generational shift in how we manage our fisheries. Instead of being reactive, we are moving to being proactive. Instead of being ad hoc, we are going to be predictable in our decision-making. I know many of my constituents are keen fishers. I know that the minister has been out there on the water with some of those fishers in my electorate and he has listened to their views.

Our government, the Palaszczuk government, has repeatedly shown that we are serious about supporting the sustainable use of fisheries in Queensland. We did that last term when we implemented our net-free zones and committed over \$10 million which was used to buy out licences to support local promotions. I remember the opposition opposed these initiatives. The local net-free zone has been a success with buy-in and support from the Mackay City Council, local anglers and visiting tourists. The Mackay Regional Council has developed a tourist fishing strategy to take advantage of the popular net-free zone at Seaforth. We have found that the net-free zone has increased the number of fish, birdlife and turtles. We have funded fisheries reform with \$20 million in new funding, 20 new officers across the state, a raft of new scientific and other monitoring programs to improve our data and a rebate scheme to introduce vessel tracking.

I acknowledge that not all sections of the fishing community support these reforms, particularly the commercial sector. I have heard many claims about the government's rationale for introducing these reforms. These claims, comments and opinions have been afforded significant consideration by the government and the department—in some cases, multiple times. This consultation ethos is built into the bill. This bill will bring Queensland into line with Australian and international best practice fisheries management. A key aspect of this bill is vessel tracking. Vessel tracking is normal in Australian fisheries. It is widely used internationally. It has also been used in trawl fisheries in Queensland for the last two decades.

Queenslanders expect that their government uses good data to make evidence based decisions. Vessel tracking provides our fisheries managers with data for good decision-making. It means that we can work smarter to demonstrate the health and sustainability of fisheries, particularly in relation to fishing around sensitive areas like our Great Barrier Reef, and there are federal environmental approvals for exports. Queensland's fisheries resources are precious, and it is our role to ensure that

they are managed sustainably into the future so that our children and grandchildren can have the pleasure of enjoying recreational fishing and the experience of buying local sustainable Queensland seafood.

I would like to quickly run through some of the key features of the bill. The bill will address and deliver more responsive decision-making through harvest strategies that set out pre-agreed and approved rules for each fishery to achieve the agreed ecological, economic and/or social objectives. This means that fishers will know in advance what is likely to happen if stocks go up or down, introducing greater predictability into the system. There are clear delineations of administrative authority as well, which will improve efficiency at departmental levels. The minister will be responsible for strategic oversight through the approval of harvest strategies, while the chief executive will be responsible for day-to-day management and making fisheries declarations in accordance with the approved harvest strategy. Again, the changes being made will not impact the majority of recreational, commercial, charter or Indigenous fishers who are doing the right thing. I commend the bill to the House.