



Speech By  
**Hon. Mark Bailey**


**MEMBER FOR MILLER**

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Record of Proceedings, 12 February 2019

## **FISHERIES (VESSEL TRACKING) AMENDMENT REGULATION**

### **Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

 **Hon. MC BAILEY** (Miller—ALP) (Minister for Transport and Main Roads) (6.50 pm): On behalf of the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, I rise to speak against this disallowance motion moved by the member for Hinchinbrook. Our government is committed to giving Queenslanders a world-class fisheries management system. We want fisheries that are sustainable. We want to use well-established technologies, such as vessel tracking, so that we can use better data to make more effective decisions about how we manage our precious public marine resources. We want to use the best data available through vessel tracking to know about our impact on the ocean and what we can do to mitigate that impact so that we can continue to provide local seafood, regional jobs and export opportunities.

Vessel tracking represents one important part of the strategy to support and maintain Queensland's iconic fisheries. It is not a new idea. The overwhelming message from stakeholders to a number of reviews since 2014—yes, that was during the term of the previous government—is that fisheries management must change. The expansion of vessel tracking across the commercial fishing fleet has been proposed since 2014, when it was recommended through the LNP's MRAG review of fisheries, and which the LNP committed to progressing at the last election.

The LNP never released this review, but, under our government, it was released. In 2017, the Palaszczuk government released the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy—an outcome of significant industry and community consultation in 2016. As part of that strategy, the government committed to introducing vessel tracking on all licensed commercial and charter fishing boats by the end of 2020 with a priority to install units on net, line and crab commercial fishing vessels by 2019. This regulation is an important part of that strategy. It will lead to more informed and responsive management, which will benefit the marine resources upon which many operators and regional communities depend. The rollout of vessel tracking is also an action of the Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan and demonstrates this government's ongoing commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef and has strong support from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority.

The most important benefit of vessel tracking technology is that it enables real-time monitoring of commercial fishing fleets and facilitates a more responsive and evidence based decision-making process. Vessel tracking is used to monitor fishing quotas and compliance with seasonal and spatial closures, particularly in and around areas that may be sensitive to fishing pressure. The information is already proving invaluable to our compliance officers in targeting people who are flouting the rules. Vessel tracking technology is also of benefit to our commercial fishers. Just a couple weeks ago the department received a complaint through its Fishwatch hotline about unattended nets in the river in Bundaberg. Compliance officers were able to access the vessel tracking platform and identify that the fisher was in attendance and cleared up the matter.

Vessel tracking is widely used in other Australian and international fisheries. It enables authorities' access to timely and improved information on what vessels are doing and where they are operating. There is similar fleet tracking in other sectors, such as road transport and mining. Vessel tracking is not a new concept. It has been a part of Queensland's trawl fishery since 1998—for more than two decades. Despite strong opposition at the time, vessel tracking has since become a proven and vitally important part of this fisheries management system.

For trawl fishermen, vessel tracking has to demonstrate that trawling in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area can be sustainable. The government has been working with commercial fishers to give them the support and assistance they need. The majority of fishers have got on board and now have vessel tracking units in place with positive feedback from many licensed holders. There are now approximately 1,400 units that have been purchased from the providers, with approximately 550 activated, registered with Fisheries Queensland and sending positions.

Since 1 January this year, Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol has focused on educating fishers and improving awareness of the new vessel tracking obligations. This work will be followed over time by a warning before a fisher is fined for noncompliance. I understand that, recently, the members for Burdekin and Burnett were on a patrol where a commercial crabber was nabbed for having underweight and female crabs. They saw the benefits of vessel tracking but, sadly, not enough for them to support this regulation.

Our government has provided significant financial support to assist commercial fishers in transitioning to the new system. Our government partnered with the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority to provide \$3 million to help pay for the purchase and installation costs associated with implementing vessel tracking equipment through a rebate scheme. The rebate scheme, which is administered by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority, commenced on 30 August and will be available until 31 December next year. All commercial fishing boat, harvest fishery and charter fishery licence holders will be able to apply. The rebate scheme has been designed so that the majority of fishers should not be out of pocket for the unit purchase or installation costs. Fishers may be eligible for reimbursement for up to seven units, depending on their licence and their fishery symbols. Once installed, commercial fishers will be required to pay for the ongoing data costs associated with vessel tracking of about \$35 to \$50 a month—a fairly modest amount.

In early 2018, significant consultation was undertaken with the industry about the draft vessel tracking policy and guidelines. Fisheries Queensland staff met with 208 fishers across a range of regional locations and a number of changes were made in response to the consultation. It is important to note that the commercial fishing industry benefits from access to fisheries resources. The government considers that the costs of vessel tracking should be shared between the government and industry. The costs to the industry were acknowledged. However, that is why a \$3 million rebate scheme was established. The department approached the Australian Maritime Safety Authority for advice and clarification on the issues raised by the industry in regard to the vessel tracking units meeting the National Standard for Commercial Vessels. The department has also worked with providers to remedy any issues with implementation as the vessel tracking units have been rolled out.

The department respects the privacy of commercial fishers' data and treats this information as confidential. Individual information collected is used for internal fisheries management purposes and is shared only with the compliance partners, such as marine parks, under strict conditions. The management of the data is delivered through the Australian Fisheries Management Authority under a memorandum of understanding. The contract between the vessel tracking satellite provider and the Australian Fisheries Management Authority requires data to be stored in a manner that satisfied Commonwealth government data security standards. Fisheries Queensland has confidentiality agreements with the providers. The trawl fleet has had vessel tracking for 15 years without any issues around data privacy.

This issue is about technology and sustainability. Leadership is about acknowledging that and supporting that. We see from the opposition another case of technophobia and, in this day and age, a lack of belief in sustainability, which, to be quite frank, is really embarrassing. Earlier, the mover of the motion, the member for Hinchinbrook, made an extraordinary statement. He said that we should not have technology such as vessel tracking units because salt water rots technology. That remark came from the member for Hinchinbrook, who turned up to his first press conference on a jet ski. I am sure the maritime industry would have something to say about that. It is an absurd proposition. It is one of the most extraordinary things that I have heard in four years.

Leadership is about managing change. The use of vessel tracking units is pretty standard practice in other states. Queensland is not Robinson Crusoe. As Queensland has such a vast coastline, the government has a responsibility to ensure the sustainability of our fisheries. This regulation does that.

I urge all members here to vote against this disallowance motion, because it does not support sustainability, it does not support technology, it does not support leadership or managing our fisheries in a sustainable way, which ultimately supports the industry. The industry can use this technology to evolve and grow. I urge members to support sustainable fisheries in Queensland by voting against this motion.