



Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 15 October 2019

**FISHERIES (COMMERCIAL FISHERIES) REGULATION, FISHERIES (GENERAL)
(VESSEL TRACKING) AMENDMENT REGULATION, FISHERIES AMENDMENT
DECLARATION**

Disallowance of Statutory Instruments

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (6.44 pm): I rise to oppose this disallowance motion moved by the shadow minister for fisheries, the member for Gympie.

Mr Stevens: Fisherman's friend!

Mr FURNER: I take that interjection; I am the fisherman's friend. Many times in this place I have offered the opposition the opportunity to have a briefing on this or any other agricultural matter. Many of them have taken up that opportunity, but some, like those participating in the debate that is occurring today, have been inept, have the blinkers on and have refused that opportunity to gain an understanding of the fisheries sector and what this motion would do if it were successful. It would be well worthwhile for the opposition to be briefed on what this disallowance motion would mean for the fisheries sector in Queensland and those jobs and those industries that it well provides for.

Simply, this disallowance motion would stop commercial fishers being able to fish. Charter fishers would not be able to operate. There would be significant environmental impacts, and rebuilding our fishery stocks would be delayed. I want to make this quite clear. The opposition's policy on fisheries would destroy the whole fishing industry in Queensland. It is not hyperbole; it is a reality. These regulations that the LNP seeks to disallow are the very ones that govern the industry in Queensland. These are the regulations that allow Queenslanders to buy locally caught fish and allow us to get out on the water through charter fishing trips, representing thousands of jobs across the commercial charter and broader sector.

As minister, I have spoken to a lot of fishers. I have spoken to commercial, recreational, charter and Indigenous fishers throughout this process—many more than you will ever meet, my friend from Gregory.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order, through the chair.

Mr FURNER: Everyone has different opinions, which I respect, and all of us in this place should respect that. As to their right, everyone acknowledges that there needs to be sustainable fisheries for our children and our grandchildren.

When I was at Tobin's fish and chip shop in Townsville, which you would know quite well, Mr Deputy Speaker—I would also encourage members to try the best fish and chips in the country after their award—I spoke with the owners, former commercial fishers who have now become academics and professionals in this field. I have spoken with the commercial fishers—I have gone out on the water with them in Hervey Bay—and with commercial crabbers and I have seen how they operate. I say to the member for Hervey Bay that I enjoyed a good four hours on the water.

Ms Grace: How many crabs did you eat? Come on, fess up.

Mr FURNER: No crabs. I have also spoken with recreational fishers who have been very supportive of these reforms as well. Now with one million recreational fishers, there are many Queenslanders who are closely monitoring what is proposed here by those opposite.

I will outline the reasons why this disallowance motion needs to be opposed and why the opposition's approach would devastate this industry. These regulations give commercial fishers access rights to fish commercially in Queensland. With this motion the LNP is stripping the right to fish from the commercial sector. If this motion moved by the member for Gympie succeeds, there will be no legal authority for commercial fishers to catch, possess or sell fish in Queensland. The LNP does not want fishers to fish. This motion moved by the LNP would see over 1,380 commercial fishers directly affected. There would potentially be a \$180 million hit to the Queensland economy. There would be no locally caught seafood for Queenslanders. What about the loss of key international markets because the LNP want to rip out the regulations that allow fishers in Queensland?

For the benefit of those opposite, the regulation that they will vote to disallow regulates the fisheries symbols and authorises commercial fishers to access the fishery and areas that they can work. There would be no authorisation for existing quota. There will not be any ability to trade quota. What about any commercial fisher with quota entitlements for coral trout, Spanish mackerel, spanner crab or trawl or stout whiting? If the LNP motion passes, their asset does not exist and it is worthless. Unless the LNP wants to end commercial fishing in Queensland, it should oppose this motion. Only Labor will vote to allow the commercial sector to continue in Queensland.

The LNP's motion also impacts the charter-fishing sector. Not only would the commercial sector be destroyed by the LNP but also Queensland's well-regarded charter sector would sink. Some 350 charter operators in the \$94 million sector would not be able to operate. I reflect on the member for Rockhampton's feedback to me on how charter fishing is growing in the Fitzroy as a result of this government's decisions to ensure it is sustainable. What about the growth of that charter-fishing sector with visitors from interstate and the United Kingdom to the Fitzroy as a result of Palaszczuk government decisions? Tourists will not have the opportunity to catch a fish or at least be on the water trying to catch a fish. Charter operators will disappear—all because of the LNP. Instead of supporting a great tourism opportunity, the opposition wants it closed down.

In terms of the potential environmental impacts of this motion, they can be only considered as significant. If fishers were able to fish, the wildlife trade operation accreditation for Queensland would be at risk. With the regulation gone because of the LNP's efforts, there would be no requirement for bycatch reduction devices or turtle exclusion devices in the trawl fishery. This would mean that there could be no fisheries exports to the United States—all because of the LNP. There would be no rules around net requirements. Granted, these rules regarding nets have been around for many years, but because those opposite cannot understand fishery regulations they will be swept aside, putting protected species at risk. Again, the LNP has not thought through this motion, at least at the most basic level.

What about reporting of commercial catch? Tonight's motion would end any reporting requirements. Without catch reporting, this would be a black marketer's dream. During the second reading of the fisheries bill in this place, we heard the opposition's approach. It would be an absolute black marketer's dream. We have already seen what was proposed in its amendments to that particular bill to give black marketers a five-day holiday, a five-day start. Those opposite want to give them a free pass through these regulations.

One reason Queensland has fisheries regulations rules in place—and has done for decades—is to ensure that fish stocks are sustainable. We on this side do not want to see our fisheries depleted from overfishing. With the number of stocks in Queensland below 20 per cent biomass, that has seen Queensland take some action to remedy, sustainability would end because of this motion. For this motion, the changes that commenced on 1 September—including seasonal closes, changes to catch limits and size limits for snapper, pearl perch and scallop—will be gone.

I table a letter that I wrote to the minister for fisheries and forestry which directly refers to the Queensland LNP's attempts to make changes in regard to this disallowance motion.

Tabled paper. Letter, dated 10 October 2019, from the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries, Hon. Mark Furner, to Assistant Minister for Forestry and Fisheries and Assistant Minister for Regional Tourism, Senator Hon. Jonathon Duniam, regarding the disallowance motion moved by the Queensland LNP in relation to fisheries regulations [1835](#).

It spells out that the regulations and the standard for bycatch are regulated by the Commonwealth Status of Australian Fish Stocks processes as either 'depleting' or 'depleted'. That is quite the case in terms of what these regulations would do if disallowed by the LNP. I am still awaiting a response on that correspondence.

If we do nothing now, we will need more drastic action in the future—just like the South Australian government, which recently banned snapper fishing for three years from November this year. We will not go down that path. We will make sure our industry is sustainable now and into the future. The new and recently introduced protections for Mary River cod will disappear. This is an endangered species. It is clear that the member for Gympie has no clue about fisheries management. It should be no surprise to anyone in this place that what is accepted as basic fisheries practice in a global sense is being overturned.

Ultimately, this is a motion about whether Queenslanders should be able to buy Queensland caught fish or imported fish. Under the LNP's plan for fisheries regulations, there would be only one choice—imported fish. The LNP plan is to shut down fisheries in Queensland and import fish—and all the biosecurity risks that come along with that—rather than support Queensland fisheries. There will be fishers who say 'fish fingers to the LNP' over this. The LNP have form on weakening fisheries in Queensland. The opposition could stand up to Canberra and support our Shark Control Program, abandoning 57 years of bipartisanship to back in its self-confessed shark-loving Prime Minister. Now its motion wants to close the shark fishery in Queensland. Sharks really have a friend in the LNP with this disallowance motion!

The LNP supports the catch and release of dangerous sharks off our beaches. Members opposite here tonight want to stop entirely sharks being caught. After the efforts of the members for Gympie and Broadwater, never again will the LNP be taken seriously by Queenslanders in regard to sharks. Unless those opposite are arch greenies who do not want to see fish caught at all, who want to see the end of the commercial and charter sectors in Queensland and the end of good environmental practices in Queensland, they should vote down this motion.

In conclusion, I want to comment on some of the contributions of those opposite. There was certainly a view—and it was backed up on this side of the chamber—that there was a copious amount of consultation right throughout this program, right throughout the time when those opposite were last in government as well. During estimates this year I tabled the MRAG report—a report commissioned by those opposite, a report that they hid and lacked the intestinal fortitude to table.

When elected in 2015, it was the Palaszczuk Labor government that tabled that report which formed the nexus of what we are doing tonight and what we have been doing all along in terms of protecting our fisheries sector. We need to ensure that we have a sustainable sector for our children, our grandchildren and the thousands of workers in the sector. What about the people who enjoy wetting a line or the commercial fishers who go out on a regular basis and bring back a great quality of Queensland fish? There was a copious amount of consultation through the MRAG report, followed by the green paper.

I also take to task the well-ventilated comments in regard to science. The member for Bancroft approached this with the view of, 'Let us not go down the path of environmental science.' I want to go down the path of science when it comes to fisheries. One thing we in portfolios get to do—and I am sure every minister would be of the same view—is spend some time with departmental staff enjoying an opportunity to gain a better understanding of how they operate and what they do.

Only a few weekends ago I had the immense opportunity to be involved with the fish monitoring people on Fraser Island. Some might say I was having a bit of time off, but I was actually working with them—collecting data and fish frames with recreational and commercial fishers up and down the coast of Fraser Island. It was about collating the science involved on how we determine whether down the path we should do something with a particular species or change the size, catch or method. What I saw and what I had an opportunity to be involved in was the collection of what they call otoliths. Otoliths are the small, calcified object behind the eye of the fish. You take that otolith to determine the age of the fish, along with the size of the frames, and then make an informed scientific decision on what to do with that particular species of fish, in this case tailor.

It is a shame that those opposite have no clue when it comes to science. It is a shame that those opposite have no clue when it comes to these regulations. They come in here and move disallowance motions on matters they have no idea about. They have not taken the opportunity to get a briefing from my department or my office to gain some very basic understanding of how to deal with fisheries. Once again, those opposite are absolutely clueless when it comes to science. I oppose this motion.