




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR OODGEROO

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FISHERIES (SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES STRATEGY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Oodgeroo—LNP) (4.23 pm): ‘Selamat Sore. Saya suka makan ikan sangat banyak’. In Bahasa Indonesian, ‘Good afternoon. I like eating fish very much.’ It has been a privilege in my almost 10 years in the parliament to have the opportunity to speak on fisheries and boating issues in representing the good people of the Cleveland district of the Oodgeroo electorate and the broader Redlands coast. In terms of our waterways, my first concern has always been for the professional and recreational activities in and on those waterways, particularly the waters of North Stradbroke Island and southern Moreton Bay but also Moreton Bay as a whole.

Commercial and recreational fishing, boating, sailing, diving and other marine activities are very popular in the Oodgeroo electorate and Cleveland district. We have one of the highest rates of boat ownership in the state. Fishing is an important industry and leisure activity in our region, as it is in many other parts of coastal Queensland.

Moreton Bay continues to be the state’s largest and most important fishery. Commercial fishing, the seafood industry, charter boat operations, recreational fishing and associated industries are worth a great deal to Queensland. Hundreds of millions—perhaps billions—of dollars of investment and thousands of jobs exist in these industries and allied flow-on industries, so it is important that our fisheries are managed in a sustainable way.

The crab, prawn, net and line industries are important in Moreton Bay. The charter boat industry is important too, as is the recreational fishing industry. Local seafood suppliers like Rufus King Seafoods on North Stradbroke Island are important, especially if you want reliable, affordable fresh prawns at Christmas time. Get your order in early! The provision of affordable, locally caught seafood is important.

The stated aims of the Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018 are to modernise Queensland’s Fisheries Act 1994 by implementing the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy released in June last year with four stated objectives: to modernise the objectives of the Fisheries Act 1994 to recognise the interests of key stakeholder groups; to clarify the decision-making process and establish harvest strategies to guide decisions; to strengthen the compliance powers and penalties to address serious fisheries offences such as black marketing; and to remove redundant provisions.

What really is taking place in this bill is an attempt to clean up the fisheries mess that almost 30 years of state Labor governments have left us with today. I have to agree with the member for Capalaba—sometimes we do agree—when he described the past management practices as ad hoc. Yes, Labor, which has been in power for most of the past 30 years, has been ad hoc in its fisheries management. That is the problem we have to address. Sadly, Queensland Labor governments have not managed our fisheries well as a whole. They have dillydallied, ordered reviews of industry and then, instead of making decisions, delayed those reviews. They have sat on their hands as fisheries like the live coral trout fishery of North Queensland and the snapper fishery of South-East Queensland have struggled. They have allowed Greens preference deals to override good fisheries policy, and they have politicised science to their own ends. If they continue to get it wrong, the impact can be far worse than

it currently is. If Labor cannot manage our fisheries better then we will enter into a crisis across multiple fish stocks. Unsustainable fishing will result in depleted stocks, unviable fishing businesses, job losses, flow-on effects to indirect jobs and expensive seafood.

In January this year I took a little holiday in South Australia and noticed in the fish shops that King George whiting was selling for as much as \$90 a kilo. It cost between \$75 and \$90 to buy whiting fillets. That is incredibly expensive and incredibly out of range for most people. It was lucky for me that, as I was there on holidays, I was able to catch some of my own.

Mr McDonald: Did you sell them at the fish shop?

Dr ROBINSON: No, I did not sell them at the shop. That would be illegal! I was fortunate to catch up-to-60-centimetre King George whiting—some real snodgers—but not everybody can go fishing and catch their own fish.

Sadly, in South Australia successive Labor governments have mismanaged its fisheries too. I am concerned that if this government continues to do what it has done for most of the last 30 years and does not change its strategies we may end up with the unaffordable seafood like South Australia is beginning to see, so it is important that state governments get fisheries management right. When the LNP came to government we saw the mismanagement and neglect of many fisheries and the signs of unsustainability in some stocks. Instead of more of the same sitting on hands, we supported our commercial fishers and set out to get the balance right between them and the environmental and important recreational fishing industry. We commissioned the independent *Taking stock: modernising fisheries management of Queensland* undertaken by MRAG in late 2014. We were seriously attempting to deal with the legacy of 14 years of Labor doing very little. Then Labor came back into government and, while some of the MRAG initiatives have been taken up, we have once again seen very little progress and action.

In terms of the committee recommendations and amendments, I support the amendments of the shadow minister and the amendments are based on the recommendations of the committee. My concerns about the management of our fisheries by this government are magnified by the indecision and confusion around the government's handling of the committee's recommendations. Firstly, there was no regulatory impact statement by the government—that means that it is probably flying blind to start with—and the process through which the Office of Best Practice Regulation works sometimes is a little curious. Did it just excuse it from having an RIS, as happened with North Stradbroke Island—you just do not need it—when it came to the economic transition because it could see that it would cost much more than the \$20 million for Straddie and now in this bill the \$20 million it is putting up in order to fix things? It again seems to choose to be flying blind. Secondly, for the government to ignore the recommendation of the parliamentary committee confirms that it is completely disorganised, but this dysfunction and disorganisation is consistent with the handling of fisheries at some stages of the past and is why I have grave concerns for our fisheries under Labor's mismanagement.

There is then the vehicle monitoring systems, and much has been said about that. In my electorate some of the smaller fishermen—the family owned small businesses—are very concerned about the added costs and overheads for them. Some concerns relate to the scale of the equipment that they believe they have to buy. Some of the smaller vessels are not suited for that gear, not to mention the cost of actually putting it in and customising it. There is also the fact that it could be quite easily damaged and they have to maintain it and replace it, so they have some very practical concerns about the workability of that. Some of them are worried about their fishing patterns or the best spots somehow being made public, and that is a reasonable concern if data was to leak to their competitors. I understand those concerns. If you consider business risk as important, that is a risk.

We need to make fisheries and fishing more sustainable in southern Moreton Bay in my area. We need to do things like invest more in artificial reefs and continue to roll out the artificial reefs plan that I have put out there for a number of years. We need an artificial reef at Wellington Point as the next one. We need to do more research so that decisions are based on science, not Greens policies. It needs to be based on real science. In my first degree on marine science I learnt very much the difference between real science and stuff that is politics. Sadly, the government has been leaning very heavily on politics and not real research.