



Speech By
Michael Healy

MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 12 February 2019

FISHERIES (VESSEL TRACKING) AMENDMENT REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (6.28 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion.

Opposition members interjected.

Mr HEALY: Thank you, gentlemen. I appreciate your comments, but I want to mention a few statistics. Mr Deputy Speaker, so rarely we learn anything whilst talking.

I stand very proudly as a member of the Palaszczuk government, which is prepared to take the time and, more importantly, make the effort to consult with communities and industries before reforms are put in place. Putting these fishing regulations together involved a long and genuine process of listening to Queensland fishers, discussing these reforms and finetuning them to make sure we were getting the best possible outcome. Contrary to what some may say, this has not been a secret process. There have been a number of opportunities for people in the industry and the broader community to have their say, including consultation with some 280 people who were met with to discuss this entire topic.

What we hear from those on the other side of the House is nothing but fear. They fear that maybe, just maybe, we might have to change something if we want future generations to enjoy sustainable fisheries. They are trying to raise fear of change. Whilst I can understand that approach, it is certainly not sustainable. The disappointing thing is that there are those on the other side of this chamber who know that introducing vessel tracking is the right thing to do. When they were in government they did their own report that supported the introduction of vessel tracking.

Mr Knuth: Shame.

Mr HEALY: These are the findings. It would be wrong for anyone to suggest that the state government has been heavy-handed in the implementation of these regulations. I commend those fishers who have got on with their business, have accessed the rebate scheme and are out there showing that sustainable fishing can be done, with vessel tracking.

The Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol has been clear from the outset that it would take an initial approach of education rather than the prosecution of any fisher who has made a genuine attempt to comply with the regulations.

Mr Knuth: Unheard of.

Mr HEALY: I will repeat that: the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol has been clear from the outset that it would take an initial approach of education rather than the prosecution of any fisher who has made a genuine attempt to comply with the regulations. That has been said before. We have committed up to \$3 million for rebates so that fishers do not bear the burden of supply and installation of tracking devices.

Mr Harper: \$3 million?

Mr HEALY: \$3 million. It is a significant investment.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Whiting): Member for Cairns, please pause for a moment. There is a high level of audible conversation. I know that people are coming and going at the moment but can we please keep quiet so we can hear the speaker with the call.

Mr HEALY: Once again, we have committed up to \$3 million for rebates so that fishers do not bear the burden of supply and installation of tracking devices.

We understand that some in the commercial fishing industry feel pressure as well. Their fisheries in some cases do not produce the same catch they once did. This is change. Unfortunately for those who do not acknowledge it, change is inevitable. This is the very reason we need to put our comprehensive fisheries reforms in place in full, including extending vessel tracking, as we have done with this regulation.

If we want to have a sustainable fishery for our children and our grandchildren to enjoy, we need to make the right decisions now to maintain that fishery. I encourage members to vote against this disallowance motion and to support the reform process. The reform process inevitably will address the concerns highlighted.

Queenslanders want and expect best practice from their regulators and for our precious public resources. Real-time monitoring of commercial fishers will assist compliance officers to target fishers not playing by the rules. It also helps demonstrate that the vast majority are following the rules and gives a better idea of what is happening under the water. The information is already proving invaluable to our compliance officers in targeting people who are flouting the rules and showing those who are doing the right thing—and, may I say, they are the majority. We need to keep moving towards sustainability in our fisheries. We will not have a legacy for our children or our grandchildren if we do not.

Mr Knuth: How about us?

Mr HEALY: It is not all about us. I will outline the benefits of vessel tracking. Real-time monitoring of commercial fishers will assist compliance officers to target fishers not following the rules. It will validate logbook information by crosschecking that fishers were actually fishing on the days stated in their logbook and in the areas they nominated. It leads to better data. It also meets international best practice standards. Vessel tracking is widely used in other Australian and international fisheries. Coming from Cairns, the gateway to the Great Barrier Reef, I can say that meeting the high standards of operating in a World Heritage area demonstrates sustainability in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. In 1998 the former minister for primary industries, Henry Palaszczuk, oversaw the rollout of mandatory vessel tracking in Queensland's trawl fishery. Many trawl fishers would argue that this information in particular has enabled them to demonstrate that trawling in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area is sustainable. That is a pretty good plug.

There are also benefits to commercial fishers. Owners can track their own vessels. We hear far too often of tragedies taking place. Family members, boat owners or fleet managers can view where their boat is through the web platform if they are worried about family members or if they want to look at where the vessels have been. Just as importantly—this is a government that wants to reduce red tape—it means the removal of unnecessary reporting requirements. Once vessel tracking is in place and operational, Fisheries Queensland will look to remove some of the existing reporting requirements; for example, having to report one hour before landing for quota species. That is why I support the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and these very important reforms.