




Speech By
Scott Stewart

MEMBER FOR TOWNSVILLE

Record of Proceedings, 28 February 2019

FISHERIES (SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES STRATEGY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr STEWART** (Townsville—ALP) (12.38 pm): I rise to support this bill. We are all very aware of the intent of this bill in terms of its four objectives, so I am not going to rehash those. This legislation has been a long time coming—and I do not mean that as a criticism but as a compliment to the consultation that has gone into this bill. In many respects, this exemplifies the consultative nature of the Palaszczuk government. There was engagement across sectors, and this will continue to be recognised in the bill, with each sector identified as having a distinct interest in the regulation and sustainability of our fisheries. It is worth reflecting on this process.

A green paper was developed and opened for consultation. The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy was developed, opened for public comment and taken to an election. Through multiple consultation processes, portside meetings and the committee process, consultation on this bill was absolute. It is disappointing that the LNP limited their involvement on fisheries. Given the public's interest in maintaining our fisheries, I would hope that a bill like this could attract bipartisan support.

We know that we need to protect and sustain our valuable seafood industry and that is why this bill is so important. Most of us love our seafood, especially around Christmas and Easter in particular. My local seafood supplier is Ingham Road Seafood—a family owned business operated by Mark, who proudly states that all his seafood is Australian and mostly caught locally. I believe that my local fish and chip shop Tobin Fish Tales is the best in Queensland. Tobin Fish Tales is owned and operated by Andrew and Renae Tobin, who both have doctorates in fisheries science. With over 40 years combined experience, their shop is a little different to most fish and chip shops. Their end game is to provide consumers with seafood from sustainable, primarily local sources, plus information about their choice. Interested customers will be able to know where their seafood came from and learn about the fishers who caught it, or the farmers who grew it, and about how each species is managed.

My love of fishing started when I was about five years old with my grandad taking me fishing on Rocky Ponds in the Burdekin. In those days there were no bag limits, no size limits and no gender requirements for mud crabs, and barra could be caught all year round—but times have changed. Then it was my turn to teach my kids how to fish—so, complete with my tinnie, down the Haughton River or Morrisseys Creek we would go. While dangling our lines waiting for the nibble of fish, I would spend time talking to my kids about bag limits, size limits and why only 15-centimetre-plus male muddies could come home with us. That became part of our great fishing adventures. The bottom line for my kids was an understanding about sustaining our fishing and seafood.

We have made the investment in our fisheries, with \$20 million in new funding for the Queensland Boating and Fisheries Patrol. This includes new officers in Townsville who do great work alongside our Department of Agriculture and Fisheries staff in looking after the health of our stocks. My kids also got to meet some of those 'fishos' waiting at the boat ramp to check our day's catch or, in most cases, non-catch.

This work will only become more important as we focus our government's efforts to preserve and enhance relationships with the reef. The black market provisions in this bill have been widely welcomed by the sector. The Queensland Seafood Industry Association noted, 'Industry will support these fines particularly if they are applied equally across criminals that are targeting the community's resources.' There are key provisions within this bill that will crack down on black marketers.

It should also be noted, with current weather meaning that shark control equipment has had to be removed here in the south owing to surf conditions, this bill mandates that shark control apparatus should only be handled by an authorised, trained person. The safety of swimmers and the public must not be placed at risk by those untrained in the use of the equipment.

I would like to talk about vessel tracking. If Queensland wants to have a world-class fishery, we need to have world-class information. Our investment of over \$4 million in new money for monitoring is an important start, and the vessel tracking will help complement this. This bill also includes penalties for failing to comply with the vessel tracking requirements. No-one doing the right thing has anything to fear. Many of the changes in the bill are unlikely to affect most fishers. Instead, it sets the framework for better outcomes and decision-making in the future. This will help us support our goal of the legacy of a sustainable fishery for our children and for our grandchildren. I commend the bill to the House.