




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR HILL

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FISHERIES (SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES STRATEGY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (12.35 pm): I rise to speak against the Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018. I have a large number of fishers in my electorate from across the industry. Whenever the government announce a new strategy, they trot out the standard line that they have consulted heavily with stakeholders and those in the industry.

Who is this panel of selected experts that the minister referred to in his media release yesterday? How many of these experts come from North Queensland? Who selected the panel? Why does the government state that we need to safeguard our fishing industry for future generations when our current generation is struggling to be allowed to fish and constantly fighting for that right? The government is changing the zones making effort units now zone specific, instead of the current, workable model allowing operators to fish from the New South Wales border to the Torres Strait. Everyone acknowledges that that system is working very well.

These changes also reduce the trawler fleets' mobility, affecting potential sustainability of each zone as vessels cannot move to other areas when the seasons vary—for example, when cyclones or floods hit. Fish stock triggers are already in place for the fishery and for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park. These fish stock triggers have never been reached, let alone breached so why are we making these changes?

Already some fishers have complained that they do not receive the 'unit is polling' SMS before they leave for work, impacting further on their ability to earn an income. We have seen reports of units blowing up and causing safety concerns for fishers. A number of VMS units have been significantly overheating. They have been a potential fire hazard. The government must engage common sense here and immediately halt the requirement for VMS units until they can 100 per cent guarantee their safety. The government has used safety as an excuse to inflict VMS on Queensland's small business fishers yet the government's actions are creating heightened safety risks.

It is common knowledge that the department's flagship system, FishNet Secure, was breached and left open for anyone to access without a password for 17 days, yet, the government and department say 'trust us'. In all industries there are those who do the wrong thing. I applaud tougher penalties for those involved in the seafood black market, but not massive, sweeping changes that hurt the majority of fishers who do the right thing. This fishing strategy should deliver minimal changes rather than the massive proposed changes that will see chaos and an illegal transfers of wealth in regional economies. I oppose this bill.