




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Seafood Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (10.02 am): The coronavirus health emergency is having a significant impact on Queensland's export fishing industries. Seeing this virus strike during this usual peak export period for live coral trout and rock lobster has been particularly cruel on our fishers and other seafood export sectors are seeing a significant drop-off in demand from China. The reduced number of flights to China as a result of coronavirus means that, even if the demand was to return, transportation of fresh Queensland seafood to that market would be difficult to achieve. With more top-quality Queensland seafood now remaining here in Australia we are looking at the knock-on effect of depressing prices in the domestic seafood market also affecting the value our fishers receive for their hard work.

Yesterday I met with Eric Perez from the Queensland Seafood Industry Association to explore options for support for this industry and, in particular, the hardworking fishers who currently cannot go fishing because of the unavailability of the Chinese export market. I would like to thank the QSIA for being proactive and constructive as we look forward at ways that we can support fishers during this difficult period. In the first instance I join with QSIA's call for the federal government to act immediately to make Newstart assistance available to these fishers who have suddenly, through no fault of their own, found themselves unable to continue in their jobs. Fisheries Queensland is also liaising with other fisheries agencies around Australia regarding options to assist industries affected by coronavirus to ensure a coordinated approach is achieved.

Our relationships with China are strong. That much was clear when I led a trade delegation to Hong Kong and Chongqing last year. I have every confidence that the high reputation and quality of Queensland agricultural and seafood products will ensure a return to our long-term pattern of increased exports to China. In the meantime there has never been a more important time for Queenslanders to support Queensland seafood. Ask for it, buy it, cook it up and eat it and then do it again. I urge every Queenslanders to hashtag 'eat Queensland seafood'.