




Speech By
Hon. Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

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MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Coronavirus, Fishing Industry

 **Hon. ML FURNER** (Ferny Grove—ALP) (Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries) (9.56 am): The coronavirus health emergency is having a significant impact on Queensland's export fishing industries. Seeing this virus strike during the usual peak export period of 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. As has been widely reported, we are seeing a knock-on effect on other parts of the seafood supply chain with pressure on local market prices that also reverberate throughout the industry. The Palaszczuk government has listened carefully to industry and acted quickly to meet its immediate needs because we care deeply about the jobs that are at stake here.

As announced by the Deputy Premier on Friday, we will waive quota fees for rock lobster and coral trout for the first six months of 2020 as well as boat licence fees for these and other fisheries affected by coronavirus such as the mud crab industry. Today I am pleased to announce a series of further measures to support this vital industry. These measures include expansion of the fishery area for tropical rock lobster fisheries for three months to reduce operating costs to allow fishers to sell product into other markets and maintain crew and jobs in the short term; a local seafood promotion campaign to encourage Queenslanders to support our local fishers by buying locally; rural financial counselling services being provided to commercial fishers, fishery supply chains and tourism businesses impacted by the coronavirus; and market diversification and resilience grants of up to \$50,000 to help develop alternative markets. These grants will be made available to support agriculture, food and fishing exporters as well as supply chain partners and industry organisations. The grants could support things like new processing equipment, refrigeration, cryovac machines, boat modifications, market research or training.

This comprehensive range of industry supports represents a \$3.66 million investment in protecting Queensland jobs related to the seafood industry. We have listened to industry, we have been working diligently with other states and we are putting our energy into protecting the jobs of hardworking Queenslanders. That is what the Palaszczuk Labor government does. It has always been about protecting people's jobs and growing more jobs for the future. We fight day and night for Queensland jobs, and we always will.