



Speech By  
**Cynthia Lui**

**MEMBER FOR COOK**

---

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2023

## **FISHERIES LEGISLATION (SPANISH MACKEREL AND BAR ROCKCOD) AMENDMENT DECLARATION**

### **Disallowance of Statutory Instrument**

 **Ms LUI** (Cook—ALP) (6.04 pm): I rise to speak against this disallowance motion. I will make a short contribution on this matter and highlight the importance of ensuring we have a long-term, sustainable fishing industry. There is no disagreement from anyone on this side of the House about the importance of Spanish mackerel and the fishing industry in general. When I made my maiden speech in this House in 2018 I highlighted that across and within my electorate fishing provides significant employment, and tourism has enormous potential.

When it comes to the disallowance motion that has been moved by the member for Traeger, it is not a motion that will in the long run help my community as we need to ensure that there is a viable and sustainable fisheries sector in Far North Queensland as well as the rest of the state. Many of my constituents, as well as tourists, flock to Far North Queensland every year—to my electorate of Cook—to take advantage of everything that Far North Queensland has to offer, including the great fishing. It is important for the long-term fisheries and tourism sectors that there is trust in fisheries management in Queensland. We need to ensure that there will be fishing and tourism opportunities in the north for many years to come.

This motion seeks to disprove the work that Fisheries Queensland has done on Spanish mackerel and its management. I am no expert on fisheries management, and I doubt there are many in this House who are, but when it comes to the Spanish mackerel stock assessment there has been a lot of work done, a lot of reviews and, thanks to the minister for fisheries, a lot of consultation. I would like to ensure that those listening to the debate are aware of the facts. When it comes to Spanish mackerel the publicly available stock assessment was showing the biomass to be between 14 per cent and 27 per cent of unfished levels, and most probably at around 17 per cent. I am advised that a biomass of less than 20 per cent is the national trigger to take action to rebuild stocks to a sustainable level.

First and foremost, there is a report that highlights the fishery has sustainability concerns. No-one wants to hear that the fish that they love to eat—I love mackerel—and that they want to catch has concerns, but wishing for things does not change the findings in the report. There was a review of that report—and I know that there has been a lot of talk about that review and it is worth highlighting that this is a topic that has been talked about for many months—but that review did show some uncertainty. At this point I would like to acknowledge again the consultation that the minister undertook. I am told that there were over 2,000 submissions from interested parties and a decision was made. The Spanish mackerel fishery has remained open to both recreational and commercial fishers. Yes, there has been a reduction in the bag limit and the commercial catch, but the fishery remains open. There are not a lot of options for government to take when the scientific advice is that there are not enough fish to support current fishing practices.

Fishers that I speak to know that they have a duty of care for the environment, and to make sure that there will be fish there for another day. The decision regarding this disallowance will determine where we go when it comes to listening to fisheries and sustainability concerns. Either we listen to the experts or we do not. I think that it is far better to have an open Spanish mackerel fishery that has an ability to recover and provide many more fish into the future than a fishery at risk of collapse. We in this place have a duty to ensure that we make the right decisions for future generations. We need to listen to the experts. We need to ensure that if there is a risk of over fishing we mitigate it. We need to ensure that the fishers and tourists of tomorrow have a sustainable fisheries sector. We need to do the right thing when it comes to our environment.

I have always been proud to stand up for the people of Cook. This disallowance motion needs to be opposed as in the long term we need a strong Spanish mackerel fishery. We have the facts before us. We must act. I oppose this disallowance motion.