




Speech By
Hon. Leanne Linard

MEMBER FOR NUDGEES

Record of Proceedings, 30 November 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Gillnet Fishing

 **Hon. LM LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (Minister for the Environment and the Great Barrier Reef, Minister for Science and Minister for Multicultural Affairs) (2.03 pm): The Great Barrier Reef is truly one of the world's most special places. The vast inshore areas, coral reefs and oceanic waters of the reef are home to thousands of species of fish, coral, marine mammals, molluscs and birds, just to name a few. Because of the reef's beauty and biodiversity, it attracts thousands of tourists every year, contributing around \$6 billion annually to the economy and supporting more than 60,000 jobs, many in regional towns and cities along the coast, like Mackay, Townsville and Cairns.

However, as many are also aware, the Great Barrier Reef is under serious threat. Unsustainable fishing practices—including the use of gillnets—are one of the three key threats to the reef's future, with climate change and run-off being the others. Our government has committed \$1 billion since 2015 towards protecting the Great Barrier Reef, including water quality improvements and stream bank remediation. However, more action is needed. That is why the Palaszczuk government, supported by the Albanese government, is phasing out gillnet fishing in the reef by mid-2027. This was first announced in June, with the details of the government's generous financial assistance package to transition affected commercial fishers out of the gillnet fishery in the Great Barrier Reef, which represents 2.6 per cent of the east coast wild caught seafood harvest, announced recently.

The \$125 million assistance package includes structural adjustment payments, gillnet buybacks, grants for licence holders to seek independent advice, and support for employees and supply chain businesses. As Bob Baldwin, chair of the Australian Fishing Trade Association, said recently, gillnets are a 'death wall'. Gillnets are placed across river mouths and indiscriminately catch a range of fish and other species, commonly resulting in significant non-target bycatch. Endangered and threatened species—such as dugong, snubfin dolphin, turtles, hammerhead sharks and sawfish—get trapped in the nets and, because the nets are unattended, drown before fishers are able to free them. The population of all of these species is declining and some, including sawfish and hammerhead sharks, are at risk of extinction if appropriate management measures are not taken. The recent ecological risk assessment prepared for the east coast inshore fishery lists gillnets as a key driver of risk to these species. We must act now.

The Palaszczuk government has been guided by current data and advice from respected scientists and industry stakeholders. Recent studies have demonstrated populations of critically endangered species—including snubfin dolphins, dugong and sawfish—cannot sustain further human related deaths. Through the reforms we are implementing, Queensland will join New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory, as well as Canada, the US and the European Union, among others, in banning gillnets from ecologically significant waters to protect endangered species.