



Speech By **Shane Knuth**

MEMBER FOR HILL

Record of Proceedings, 28 November 2023

FISHERIES LEGISLATION (SPANISH MACKEREL AND BAR ROCKCOD) AMENDMENT DECLARATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr KNUTH** (Hill—KAP) (5.54 pm): I rise to support the member for Traeger's disallowance motion against the Fisheries Legislation (Spanish Mackerel and Bar Rockcod) Amendment Declaration 2023 and specifically subordinate legislation No. 80's introduction of additional Spanish mackerel fishing restrictions. This includes reducing the total annual quota entitlement take for commercial fishers from 578 tonnes to 165 tonnes; reducing the recreational possession limit to one fish per person or two fish per boat; removing the previous additional possession allowances for extended charter trips; and adding a further regulation period for the northern Spanish mackerel waters from 2023 to 2025.

I totally believe that this is an absolute stitch-up. It has nothing to do with science or what is good for the industry. It is all about the state government pandering to overseas agencies like UNESCO which it believes is a god-like agency which sees everything and knows everything that is happening on the other side of the world. I really believe that a good, strong government would say that we are here to represent our small businesses and fishers, not representing what is in the best interests of an overseas agency. This is gutless and pandering to an overseas interest that is destroying families' generational commercial fishing outlets and attacking recreational fishers. Every Queenslander will suffer because of a significant rise in the cost of wild caught local seafood—and that is if they are lucky enough to find locally caught seafood on our shelves because most of the seafood in Woolworths and Coles is from overseas.

The majority closure of the Spanish mackerel fishery has been felt far and wide, particularly in North Queensland. The writing was on the wall back in 2021 after a report from the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries regarding the closure of the Spanish mackerel fishery. This report revealed flaws in the management of the fishery by the state government or the changed model used for the assessment of stock levels in the fishery. In the report the commercial harvest of Spanish mackerel since 2004—and this is very important—averaged 300 tonnes annually, almost half the allowable limit. Even if we added in 170 tonnes annually from recreational fishers, it was still well below the commercial annual quota limit. According to DAF's stock assessment of Australian east coast Spanish mackerel in 2018, it clearly stated that the annual harvest of around 550 tonnes across all sectors would build the biomass or stock levels towards 60 per cent. I want to say that again: according to DAF's stock assessment of Australian east coast Spanish mackerel in 2018, if 550 tonnes of Spanish mackerel are harvested annually, stock levels should be maintained at 60 per cent. That is in its report. However, three years later fishers were being told that the stock levels were now at 17 per cent despite never reaching the 550 tonne annual limit.

How is it possible that the Spanish mackerel stock levels fell to 17 per cent if, according to fisheries, total fishing has been well below the annual commercial quota since 2004? The take has been well below quota. It was saying that if it continues at 550 tonnes every year it will be at 60 per cent and

all of a sudden it is saying that it is down to 17 per cent and it is an absolute disaster. Either Fisheries Queensland poorly managed the fisheries for 17 years and should be held accountable or the process used to measure the correct stock status is seriously flawed. There is no other explanation except one that came to light recently which confirmed that both the federal and state governments had traded the closure of the Spanish mackerel fishery in return for UNESCO giving the Great Barrier Reef a free pass.

Both recreational and commercial fishers say that in the last 12 months they have never seen more Spanish mackerel. Some of them are saying they are almost jumping into the boat. Last week we finally saw the federal government introduce country of origin labelling laws for seafood sold in hospitality venues so that Australians can identify what is local and what is overseas caught seafood when purchasing. Country of origin labelling means they can walk into a venue and know that the barramundi is caught in Normanton or the Spanish mackerel is caught on the east coast. I believe that is a good thing.

The member for Traeger introduced the Food (Labelling of Seafood) Amendment Bill into the Queensland parliament two years ago, yet the state Labor government and the LNP both voted against it. This is the final insult to the east coast fisheries. The Labor federal government pats itself on the back for finally recognising that it is a great thing for customers to identify what is locally caught seafood—which is what the KAP has been advocating for for years and introduced a private member's bill to do—yet the same federal government and the state government then do everything possible to destroy the very industry they say they are supporting by bowing to international agencies to close the Spanish mackerel fisheries and further ban all gillnet fishing and also target recreational fishers.

Over the years the Labor government has targeted fishers. If members cast their minds back to 1993, the Goss government pushed for the banning of fishing in national parks. They received retribution for that. There was a lot of anger about it. Eventually it ended up costing the Goss government in 1996. Yellow zones were implemented by the Labor government around 2007. We have seen bag limits come in. Small business has been a target. Beekeepers were kicked out of national parks. Vegetation management laws and reef run-off laws continually target Australian owned small businesses, farmers and fishers. It does not stop.

In closing, it is disappointing to see government constantly targeting and hurting local farmers, fishers and beekeepers. I support this disallowance motion and I am calling on the government to undertake a review of the science behind the reduced 2023-24 quota and catch limits, with regard to be given to the independent assessment undertaken by Simon Hoyle and Alistair Dunn from Hoyle Consulting and Ocean Environmental and restore the Spanish mackerel total allowable commercial catch and bag/boat limits for recreational anglers to 50 per cent of the 2022-23 values while reviewing the science behind the reduced 2023-24 quota and catch limits, effective immediately and to continue until the review is complete. I wholeheartedly support this disallowance motion moved by the member for Traeger.

Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER (Ms Bush): Member for Hill, before you take a seat, during your contribution you did use some unparliamentary language. Can I get you to withdraw that.

Mr KNUTH: I withdraw.