




Speech By
Aaron Harper

MEMBER FOR THURINGOWA

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**AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT
BILL**

 **Mr HARPER** (Thuringowa—ALP) (5.26 pm): I rise to speak on the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill. From the outset, I will say it will be less 'ruff' and far less 'bark and bite' than last night's contribution. In regards to declarations, having grown up in North Queensland and in the Bowen area, I fished extensively around Bowen and dragged nets up and down Queens Beach for garfish. What I am about to say is a sad indictment: I have lived at Abbot Point during its construction and been smashed by Spanish mackerel there, but in the past 10 years I have barely wet a line. That is just the reality of what we do. Maybe I should have taken a leaf out of the book of the former premier, the Hon. Tom Byrnes, and bought a boat a decade ago and called it *The Electorate*. My staff could constantly say I am out in 'the electorate'.

The main objectives of the bill are to: amend the Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008 to enhance community safety—I will talk a little bit about that—by significantly reforming the control and management of dogs; amend the Fisheries Act 1994 to introduce a framework for independent onboard monitoring, or IOM, under the Fisheries Act as an outstanding element of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027 to meet key commitments made by the Queensland government to support the Great Barrier Reef; and enhance the efficacy of and modernise provisions relating to fisheries enforcement and streamline the process for amending aquaculture approvals by creating a separate approval for operational components to be processed under the Fisheries Act.

The discussion paper sought community views on a number of proposals to promote responsible dog ownership and better protect the community from dangerous dogs. Dog management presents an ongoing challenge for local governments, health systems and communities. Unbelievably, more than 8,500 complaints about aggressive dogs and dog attacks are received annually by local governments across Queensland. Each year, 2,500 dog attack victims require hospitalisation and, worryingly and very concerning, over 80 per cent are children, some of whom have been attacked in their own homes.

In my former career as a paramedic with over 30 years experience, I attended some dog attacks, and they are traumatic to the victims and the family, particularly where children are involved. Unbelievably, I was bitten a couple of times on the job as well. I remember in the nineties a police officer actually pulled a firearm when a dog attacked me as we were wheeling someone out. It was one of those intense moments and I am glad it was controlled, but as I speak today it reminds me that we need better regulation for the control of dangerous dogs. I will pick up a point made by the member for Stretton in relation to attacks on frontline workers, such as attacks on posties. We hear tragic stories about attacks on electricity meter readers. Those are absolutely tragedies that have occurred in this state.

I call for more regulation and control and I applaud the minister for this particular piece of legislation. It will make the community safer, Minister, and thank you for your work. I acknowledge the former committee. Of course we have taken on agriculture in the health and environment committee. I feel like a bit of a fifth wheel on this, but I wanted to speak to it because I have had some direct personal

experiences. It is commendable that we put better regulation and control around dangerous dogs. In my current role, constituents ring me all the time about dangerous dogs which have been let out and have attacked small pets. They are mauled. They are deeply upsetting incidents.

Well done again to the minister and those on the committee who reviewed the bill. It is all about community safety. Importantly, it imposes a new statewide ban on restricted dog breeds. I am supportive of the penalties for the owners of dogs that cause harm and the introduction of a new offence that includes imprisonment as a maximum penalty for the most serious dog attacks. These amendments clarify when a destruction order must be made for a regulated dog and it streamlines the external review process for regulated dogs to minimise the unnecessary delays that are experienced by councils and relevant parties.

I want to make a brief contribution on the amendments to the Fisheries Act about onboard monitoring. In November 2022, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, released the report on the reactive monitoring mission to the Great Barrier Reef on 21 March 2022. The report recommended that the Great Barrier Reef be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger and it identified 10 priorities and 12 additional recommendations for urgent implementation.

Impacts from the commercial fishing sector on threatened species is a key consideration for UNESCO in determining whether to list an area as 'in danger'. Such a listing would have major economic and reputational impacts on the Queensland tourism industry and the Queensland government. To address the priority and the additional recommendations, the Queensland government has made six key commitments, including legislating the requirement for mandatory IOM for the remaining N1-limited gillnet licences and the east coast trawl fishery by March 2024. If IOM is not implemented in Queensland priority commercial fisheries, WTO export approvals may be revoked. Consequently, fishing access, particularly within the GBR World Heritage area, may be reviewed, resulting in reduced or restricted access and less commercial catch and supply of seafood to domestic and international markets.

We know how important seafood is to our local tourism industry. These are sensible recommendations under the Fisheries Act. I commend the bill to the House.