




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR STRETTON

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FISHERIES (STRUCTURAL REFORM STAGE 2) AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr MARTIN** (Stretton—ALP) (5.32 pm): I rise to oppose this disallowance motion. The regulations that it seeks to repeal are good, sound and the product of consultation and scientific evidence and, what is more, they are working. Labor will always act to protect Queensland's environment and our wildlife, including the Great Barrier Reef, fish stocks and endangered species. At the same time, we also support sensible regulation that protects fish stocks to ensure our fishing stock remains sustainable so that future generations of Queenslanders and Australians can also benefit from this exceptional natural resource.

Whilst I understand where the KAP are coming from, advocating for the fishing boats and fishing jobs that might be affected, I do not agree that we can just bin scientific limitations that were put in place to ensure that the industry sticks around for the long haul and that jobs last into the future, not just until the fish run out. After all, there might be fewer jobs if we put in rules to keep fish stocks sustainable but there will be zero jobs if all the fish are gone.

In contrast, I do not really understand the position of the LNP—the scrambled eggs approach. I am not sure what they are up to. For years in opposition they railed against, opposed and voted against our reforms on sustainable fisheries. However, since being elected it seems it is yet another thing they have backflipped on. Just today, we heard weasel words from the LNP in response to whistleblowers' revelations that nursing numbers were being cut, along with the health workforce attraction scheme. Like the weasel words used by the Premier, they say one thing before the election and something else right after. It looks like it is the same again with this motion—lots of talk before the election, making all kinds of promises to commercial fishers and a different story the day after the election.

As a new member of the primary industries committee, I look forward to contributing in support of Queensland's fantastic primary industries. Whilst Stretton certainly is not a farming or fishing community, I do feel like my community has a lot of experience, especially when it comes to consuming seafood. In Stretton, we all know our seafood. We know good quality seafood. I have spoken in this place before about our fantastic restaurants in Stretton. Do not worry Clerks—I will not be tabling any menus today, although it is always very tempting.

In Stretton, we have so many places where you can get fresh or even live fish. In our supermarkets, you can purchase live seafood. There is the highest quality seafood in our restaurants. We have famous dishes like the prawn bao buns from Sushi Honke, the Angamaly fish mango curry at Lemon Chillies and deep fried salt and pepper soft shell crab at 9 Seafood, just to name a few. There is a lot of competition amongst restaurants and chefs to give discerning customers what they want. To do this, they need access to good quality seafood that is sustainable and does not destroy our environment.

The issue here—and I hope it has been highlighted by all this talk about delicious seafood—is that demand is strong but, if left unchecked, with indiscriminate overfishing in the gulf or Great Barrier Reef chasing supply to feed this demand we will lose this precious resource, we will lose future jobs in the industry and, essentially, we will take away seafood from future generations. Furthermore, we have seen this play out in countries around the world, and I mentioned in my address-in-reply in the last sitting that people come from all around the world to settle in Stretton. If you do get chatting to them about fishing, it is always quite interesting. They come from countries like China, the Philippines or Indonesia and they will often comment that the fish there have gone. If you want to go recreational fishing, it is nowhere near as easy as it is in Australia, and the ability to go fishing is something that they really enjoy when they settle in Stretton.

With overfishing and unsustainable practices, commercial fishing fleets from other countries have had to go further and further afield to catch seafood, and we cannot let that happen here. So we have to support sustainable fishing, and that is what this regulation does. It aims to phase out destructive fishing practices in the gulf, like gillnet fishing, which disproportionately harm vulnerable species such as hammerhead sharks, sawfish and marine turtles. While individual fisher practices can limit the risk of entanglement and improve post-entanglement survival, the potential to catch and harm non-target species with gillnets cannot be avoided. It also protects species like hammerhead sharks, which are particularly vulnerable to being caught in gillnets, and loggerhead turtles, which are listed as endangered, with an estimate suggesting a decline of over 50 per cent in the past several decades. Green sea turtles are also classified as vulnerable. Sawfish are highly endangered, and it is primarily due to habitat destruction, overfishing and the loss of mangrove and seagrass ecosystems which are essential for their young. In Australia, up to five species of sawfish can be found and three of these—the largetooth sawfish, the green sawfish and the dwarf Queensland sawfish—are all currently listed as vulnerable. Sawfish have lost over half their habitat worldwide and northern Australia represents one of the last viable populations, thanks mostly to its remoteness and relatively untouched coastline.

The gulf contains the world's last remaining viable and threatened populations of hawksbill and green turtles that migrate between the Great Barrier Reef and the Gulf of Carpentaria, and these animals, which are protected in these zones, are not only iconic but also held in high cultural significance by many traditional owners. The regulations also reduce bycatch, which helps to preserve endangered species and maintains ecological balance, which is important in such critical habitats like the gulf. The new gillnet-free zones improve the sustainability of fish stocks by minimising overfishing and protecting nursery grounds. This helps to ensure the long-term viability of the ecosystem there.

Supporting this motion could reintroduce harmful practices, negating the progress that has been made in protecting endangered species and sustainable fisheries. It would essentially be backtracking which could also lead to the Great Barrier Reef being listed as 'in danger', potentially harming tourism and international support for conservation efforts. Furthermore, if restrictions are weakened, displaced fishing efforts might intensify in nearby areas, risking overfishing, harming the surrounding ecosystem.

Altering plans after implementing financial assistance schemes could create economic instability and uncertainty for stakeholders who have already adapted to the reforms. What about the people who have already taken cash for these buyouts? Will they go out fishing in competition with those remaining? That would certainly not be fair.

In conclusion, I urge members not to support the disallowance motion and instead support scientific evidence, sustainability, ongoing jobs and ongoing fish stocks.