




Speech By  
**Leanne Linard**

**MEMBER FOR NUDGEES**

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

 **Ms LINARD** (Nudgee—ALP) (5.57 pm): I rise to speak against the disallowance motion moved by the member for Traeger. This subordinate legislation allows for crucial reforms which establish gillnet-free areas in the Gulf of Carpentaria as well as allowing for the equitable transition of licensing and compensation for commercial fishers impacted by these changes. Preventing the use of gillnets in the gulf and the Great Barrier Reef is deeply important for the survival of the threatened species which call those waters home. 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 allowed to continue. The ecological risk assessment prepared for the east coast inshore fishery listed gillnets as a key driver of risk to these species.

This is why our government took the strong action last term to introduce these reforms—reforms that were guided by current data and advice from respected scientists and industry stakeholders. Of course, concern regarding the interactions of gillnet fishing with threatened and endangered species is not a new conversation with the fishing industry. Implementing a system of more stringent controls over netting practices to protect dugongs was first announced by the federal and Queensland governments in 1997. The 2003 Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Zoning Plan also reflects restrictions for gillnet fishing in the reef. Assessment of the Queensland East Coast Inshore Fin Fish Fishery in 2019 indicated intermediate to high risk ratings for dugongs and turtles. This is again reported in the assessment in 2021, with a high risk rating for dugongs and some turtle species, leading to publication of the *Protected species management strategy for the east coast inshore fishery* in 2021.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and Queensland department of agriculture and fisheries database shows that more than 1,000 sawfish and 119 dugong have been caught in gillnets since 2002. GBRMPA data shows at least 61 dugongs have been killed in gillnets within the Great Barrier Reef since 2010. GBRMPA data also indicates at least 13 of these were in dugong protection areas. These numbers only account for the deaths that we are aware of, that have been reported. Over 90 per cent of sawfish interactions were reported post 2017, coinciding with the introduction of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.

Fisheries and threatened species experts, like Professor Col Limpus, chief scientific officer of the QPWS threatened species unit, tell us that there is an under-reporting of species caught in gillnets. Recent studies have demonstrated that populations of critically endangered species, including snubfin dolphins, dugong and sawfish, cannot sustain further human related deaths. Through these reforms, Queensland joined New South Wales, Victoria and the Northern Territory as well as Canada, the United States and the European Union, among others, which have banned gillnets from ecologically significant

waters to protect threatened and endangered species. Any comments in respect of the science not being there are another excuse to try to put the blinkers on in respect of the fact that the evidence is there, it is proven and it is international.

These protections are in place in these jurisdictions and ours because they are important, because they are backed by science and evidence and because they work. The reforms allowed in this subordinate legislation are part of a larger package which include working towards a net-free Great Barrier Reef. Removing gillnets from the reef addressed key recommendations from the UNESCO World Heritage Committee to prevent an 'in danger' listing, and it works towards protecting the reef for generations to come. The action we took paid dividends for all of the communities that depend upon the reef and the affected areas of the gulf, for the state and for the country as a whole—all of which depend on retaining the confidence of domestic and international communities that this World Heritage area is being appropriately managed and protected.

The UNESCO World Heritage Committee announced in September 2023 that it would not list the reef as being in danger as a direct result of these reforms and others which both the Commonwealth and the state party in Queensland committed to and delivered. The resulting decision not to list the reef was welcomed by both parties. I know that the Katter party members at the federal level and state level think this is some secret New World Order conspiracy theory and that international organisations like UNESCO—

**Mr Knuth:** No, we don't.

**Ms LINARD:** Well, I am quoting your media release. They think that organisations like UNESCO are breaching the Magna Carta. That is according to your comments in your media release and your stand up—

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER** (Dr O'Shea): Member, please address your remarks through the chair.

**Ms LINARD:** Sorry, Madam Deputy Speaker. Both of those ideas are straight out of the QAnon cooker playbook, but the reality is that Australia is part of an international community. This international community works together to protect the environment we all share and we are all caretakers of for future generations.

While protecting the Great Barrier Reef, it was equally important that protections were introduced for the gulf to avoid displaced fishing effort to this ecologically sensitive area. The gulf does not enjoy protections in the form of legislated marine park zoning, making the reforms all the more important to balance economic and ecological interests in these waters. It is not just the ENGOs, the tourism sector and communities that want to see these protections. The recreational fishing sector have also called for sustainable protections—a sector and their calls to remove gillnets that the Katter party once supported. In fact, it was an election policy. It was in your election campaign flyer that you also previously supported as a party the removal of gillnets.

**Madam DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Again, member for Nudgee, please address your remarks through the chair.

**Ms LINARD:** I also note the recent reference by the Katter party to a recent James Cook University report which has labelled dugong populations as 'thriving'. In my view, that is a misrepresentative characterisation of what is contained in that report, which from my recollection says that some populations are 'good' in the northern part of the GBR. These are areas where dugong populations have had the benefit of gillnet restrictions for some time, which further supports the effect of gillnet restrictions like those we are talking about here today.

The Gulf of Carpentaria inshore fishery consultation on gillnet-free areas and fishery reforms discussion paper, which was released last year, recorded 93 per cent support from respondents for the implementation of the proposed gillnet-free zones. I acknowledge and thank submitters and the experts and stakeholders who sat on the independent Future Fishing Taskforce who recommended fair payments to eligible employees who were impacted by the removal of gillnet licences and ensured an approach for paying structural adjustment consistent with that of the Great Barrier Reef and also Great Sandy regions. These protections have been called for by traditional owners, recreational fishers, scientists and the community for the economic and ecological protections they bring to a critical inshore fishery along our Queensland coastline.

I, like my colleague the member for Ferny Grove, do respect the passion that the Katter party members bring in this chamber for the interests of those they serve, but equally it is not true to say that the science is not clear and the evidence is not clear and available with respect to the impact this is

having on TEPs. These threatened and endangered species are important to not only Queensland's reputation and Australia's reputation but also across the world. These species are ours to ensure they are not pushed over the brink to extinction.

**Mr Dametto:** Extinction?

**Ms LINARD:** To extinction, because that is where the science is going. These are evidence-based regulations and they must remain to protect Queensland's reputation and precious environment.

**Mr Dametto** interjected.

**Ms LINARD:** I will not be goaded into talking about salties, my colleague. We are not talking about salties here. That is why we must support these regulations remaining and that is why I do not support the disallowance motion.