




Speech By
Mark Furner

MEMBER FOR FERNY GROVE

Record of Proceedings, 10 December 2024

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

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr FURNER** (Ferry Grove—ALP) (5.49 pm): I rise this evening to make a contribution to the disallowance motion moved by Katter's Australian Party. I firstly want to put on record that you cannot deny the KAP's commitment to their constituents, particularly the member for Traeger. He and I have had many discussions around this particular aspect of the motion, including last year after the policies of the previous government—sustainable fisheries practice and the formation of the fisheries taskforce—were put in place. Yes, the initial approach was to consider banning gillnet fisheries in the Great Barrier Reef; however, based on the information provided by experts, science and consultation, the government made the decision to look at areas within the gulf.

I want to clearly put on record the impacts of this. It represents 20 per cent of the gulf in total. The gulf is a huge area. The relevant areas include: the net-free north area; northern gulf waters; Pomppuraaw waters; Topsy Creek, Norman River and western gulf waters. I have been in many of those places not only in my portfolio of agriculture and fisheries but also in my time in local government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships. I have visited all of those discrete, remote Indigenous communities. I have visited and fished on many of those rivers, including the Ducie and the Wenlock. Some of those areas are not so far down into the gulf but they are certainly on the western side of the cape. They are unique, beautiful areas. They are areas that need to be protected and considered for the value they contain in terms of the fisheries sector. That is why as a government we consulted time and time again.

I refute the suggestion by the member for Gympie that there was no consultation. He was misleading the House when he made those comments earlier this evening. The fact is that as a government we were not initially happy with the assessment of the gulf in particular, and that is why we went back. I am pleased that the member for Nudgee is in the chamber this evening as well. We engaged with First Nations people in that area and determined that there needed to be further consultation, which we did. On the basis of that we came back with a revised consideration of the areas for protection. Areas that are unique areas will protect those TEPS—threatened, endangered and protected species—such as sawfish. The member for Stretton spoke about sawfish this evening. I have seen some of those sawfish in the wild. I have seen the remains of the blade of a sawfish after it has been caught up in nets or caught by people who may have been doing the right thing or may not have. Nevertheless, it is a species that needs protection.

We do rely on science and consultation. I want to reflect on the good people of Fisheries Queensland, in particular the scientific monitoring group. While on K'gari I saw them collect the frames of tailor, one of my favourite eating fish. Around August each year they collect frames and assess them.

They cut between the nose and eyes of the fish and take out a little part called the otolith. The otolith tells you the age of the fish. They sex the frame of the fish and work out an assessment of bycatch. That is just one example.

I do note that someone—it might have been the member for Traeger—commented on king threadfin. Yes, the information provided to us was the stock assessment was around five per cent. You take on balance what is provided to you by our hardworking public servants. The trigger for taking action in the nation is 20 per cent, so naturally there had to be consideration given to taking action on king threadfin. That is why we took that action.

In terms of the fisheries taskforce, following recommendations moved to introduce the closure of gillnets structural adjustment payments were made in many cases. There were 4,000 submissions to the taskforce just for the gulf alone and we acted on those. In my previous boardroom we engaged with some of those commercial fishers and the member for Traeger at one stage to consider changes, which we did later on. Those payments were made through QRIDA. I had the opportunity to talk to some of the people who have taken on board the new licence that has been provided to make sure there is a reduction in the catch of biomass of TEPS in terms of that type of fishery. That is why science and consultation are important.

I do note that the member for Gympie spoke about a review of the sustainable fisheries policy. I look forward to hearing that review, because the last time the LNP was in government they sacked hundreds of fisheries staff. They closed the Gladstone depot. I would hope this is not another example of terminating more public servants, in particular in fisheries, and closing more depots. Is that the type of review they are going to conduct? Will we see more public servants terminated by this Crisafulli government? I am sure that is on their agenda. We have seen people being muzzled here this evening. On the very first sitting day we saw their lack of consideration for our First Nations people. You will never replicate the consideration and consultation we did when we were in government in terms of engagement with our First Nations people. We respect our First Nations people. We consult with them and we take on board their concerns. That is why in particular—

Mr Perrett interjected.

Mr FURNER: I am not taking your interjections, you fool. That is why we considered—

Dr ROWAN: Mr Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order.

Mr FURNER: I withdraw. That is why we consulted with the people from Pormpuraaw when they came to visit us about TEPS. These are species they have engaged with over the years. That is why government needs to consult with our First Nations people, fisheries and communities on the policy changes you are about to make and take into consideration the balance between science and making sure it is fair and just. That is why I am looking forward to hearing contributions from anyone else who wishes to speak on this disallowance motion. We have heard one person from the LNP speak on it tonight. I am pleased that every member of the KAP spoke on it. I accept their passion. Nevertheless, on the balance of what we have seen and what we have been provided with I will not accept this disallowance motion this evening.