




Speech By
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AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES AND OTHER LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr KATTER** (Traeger—KAP) (4.50 pm): I rise to contribute to the debate on the Agriculture and Fisheries and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2023. I will briefly deal with the dog issue. I do not like standing up and criticising if I do not have a better alternative. Obviously we see the problem there and it is very difficult to fix. The problem is with enacting those laws. The flaws in how to address that were made quite clear, so I am not going to criticise the intent. This legislation may create more of a mess and slow up the legal process by trying to address it in this way. I will leave it at that.

The most important and obvious thing from the KAP's perspective is that this legislation enshrines into law the obliteration of the fishing and agricultural industries. When I went to school, I was taught that democracy was about the rule of the people and sovereignty—that we looked after our own state and our own country, and kept those interests at heart. For some reason, UNESCO—with an office based in Paris—now seems to have a bigger influence on democracy than people. I cannot get my head around it. I am sure there is a lot more to it that I do not know about. This is about UNESCO, particularly when we talk about the gulf. This did not come from a fishing study to see if it was sustainable or not. To be fair, the government is quite honest about that. There was no data to back this up, and I do not think my criticism has been properly addressed by the agriculture minister. I think I should be talking to the environment minister here in the parliament.

Tanya Plibersek wrote a letter to the director-general of UNESCO outlining how the Australian and Queensland governments were committing to 'substantial actions to secure the future of the reef'. If you were a fisherman in the gulf you would probably respond by saying, 'That's pretty bad for the fishing industry, but I guess we'll be okay because we live on the western side of the cape.' As destructive as that was on the east coast, you would have at least thought you were safe in the gulf. Much to our chagrin, there was an extra little line in there that said 'and we're interested in the interrelationship between any of the fish that might swim all the way across Cape York, back down there and then back onto the reef'. The worst thing is that you cannot say it was shut down. If I said it was shut down you would all scream, 'We're not shutting it down; we're just reducing areas.'

Then you start invoking the threatened species list and you say, 'We've got to save threatened species.' That's a good reason to shut things down in Karumba and Weipa, that is, the fisheries in the gulf. Now what you have done is put in big areas, which compresses things. You have not demanded that anyone exit the industry and there is no decent exit package, so everyone is just going to squabble over these little compressed areas now. If you were not threatening certain species before, you definitely are now because you are compressing everyone in there. They are all going to flog each other to death until, in 10 years time, they realise they are not all viable. Congratulations: you have forced everyone out of the industry without having to pay them out.

It is a bit of a problem for me as the member for Traeger because Karumba does not have a lot of industries. We do not have a lot of options in remote areas like Weipa. We do not have a lot of options. This was a fallback—a good, diverse industry—and as a result of a commitment to UNESCO from Canberra it comes up here. Everyone acquiesces and says, 'We love the environment; let's save it,' and here we are embedding in legislation the destruction of a wonderful industry.

You can get market applications that show transponders on boats. It will show you the fishing boats in Indonesian waters just off Australian waters in the gulf. You will see a little handful of dots operating in the gulf; you can hardly see the water in the Indonesian waters because they are flogging those waters right now. You will now have to buy the fresh fish that we were accustomed to over in Indonesia. Congratulations, all you lovers of the environment: you are endorsing practices over there and at the same time ruining our sovereignty—a word that Prime Minister Albanese has been using a lot lately—over food. I have been talking to the aquaculture people lately, and they are not fist bumping the air either about the developments in their industry. They are not allowed to develop much either. I do not know how you address all of these things on the basis of a commitment to UNESCO.

The other interesting observation I have made is that most of the monitoring on sustainable fisheries—not all, but most—comes from the logbooks of commercial fishermen. If your plan is to take out commercial fishermen, I do not know how that works. You are not going to be sending Fisheries boats out there to net fish so they can count them. I do not know how you are going to monitor the fisheries, but I suppose it does not mean much now anyway because there is no science involved in any of this.

There are some other demands made by UNESCO. Let's see if any of this sounds familiar. UNESCO's demands of the weak Queensland and Australian governments read exactly like a playbook to kill off agriculture and fishing in North Queensland: map grazing land and action priority gully prevention and remediation; double compliance activity across the reef; expand land-clearing legislation and accelerate enhanced compliance; accelerate progress to achieve water quality targets; and the establishment of new water quality targets for 2025-2030. My point is that nowhere do we read 'develop the north', 'release water from the Flinders' or 'build infrastructure to develop new jobs'. All we read is 'drive agriculture and fisheries out of business'.

This is all about decimating our industries. It hurts us most in the regional areas and in the north because we do not have a lot else to fall back on. All too often we are the sacrificial lamb to people like UNESCO so everyone can feel good about what they are doing. We have wonderful producers like David Wren in Karumba. Like many other fishermen, he has invested the best part of his life in that place. He has invested a fortune. He built up his business and truly tried to work with the government to give them what they were after in terms of sustainable fisheries, but it does not matter if you try and do things right. If the political winds blow and UNESCO stamps its feet, we all seem to come to attention and do their bidding in parliament. It is so disappointing to be here today in this parliament talking against this bill and seeing it go through, because it will mean the destruction of many great livelihoods that have been built up for generations in places like Karumba.

You might say, 'This doesn't shut them down; they can still operate.' Try and get a bank loan or even buy a new car or a house if you put on the form, 'My business is commercial fishing.' Try and get a loan for your new boat motor, to upgrade your depot or whatever. This really just blows a hole in the future of the industry. If that is what you want then you have achieved it. Well done! This is an indication of what the government intends to achieve by signing these agreements. If you want to chase boats in Brisbane, great, but you are using us as sacrificial lambs. We have seen it in the sugar industry, the grazing industry and the native timber industry. We are removing all of the state forests. We cannot get new leases on those yet so there is great uncertainty around that. I hope it is recorded in the annals of history that, in the future, we paid for what has been done here, particularly in regional areas. In the future we will look back and see how people voted. I want it to be known that we will stand against this, because we stand for those industries that you are trying to kill with this bill.