

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**  
**No. 1801**  
**Asked on Thursday, 1 November 2007**

**MR FOLEY** asked the Minister for Primary Industries and Fisheries (MR MULHERIN)-

**QUESTION:**

As I have raised in this Parliament on many occasions the need to fairly compensate commercial fishermen in my electorate by buying back their licences and, given the Federal Opposition has recently stated that it will spend \$7.5m on a voluntary buy back of commercial line fishing licences in the Torres Strait if elected, and the Federal Government having bought back fishing licences with the institution of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park—

When will he get the cheque book out and do the same?

**ANSWER:**

The Great Sandy Marine Park was zoned in August 2006. The Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries worked closely with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to minimise the impact on commercial fishers as a result of the zoning. I am also aware that EPA consulted heavily with the Queensland Seafood Industry Association. This cooperative approach meant that many of those fishers who historically operated in the area are allowed to continue to do so. The result has been a positive conservation outcome, with minimal impact on commercial fishers.

Last year, the *Fisheries Act 1994* was amended to include provision for compensation for commercial fishers when their rights are diminished in certain circumstances. This will ensure that in the future if a fisher's rights are impacted by a change to the legislation, they will be entitled to claim compensation.

I am committed to working closely with my new Cabinet colleague, the Honourable Andrew McNamara, Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change and Innovation to look after the interests of the commercial fishing industry, while also ensuring that our unique marine ecosystems are protected for future generations.

The Torres Strait buyout and the compensation paid for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park rezoning referred to in the question are completely separate issues.

The buyout in Torres Strait is aimed at meeting Australia's obligations to share catch with Papua New Guinea under an International Treaty. It is also encouraging economic development opportunities for indigenous fishers in Torres Strait and reducing their dependence on the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) programme.

In regard to compensation paid by the Commonwealth Government for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park zoning, this was only implemented because of large scale closures to fishing that had a significant impact on the commercial sector. The same level of impact did not occur through the zoning of the Great Sandy Strait Marine Park.

Commercial fishers make a significant contribution to our local economies and regional communities and I am committed to ensuring they receive fair compensation when necessary.