

Question on Notice

No. 1622

Asked on Thursday, 30 November 2023

DR M ROBINSON asked the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities (HON M FURNER)—

QUESTION:

With reference to the phasing out of gillnet fishing affecting N1-11 licences operating on North Stradbroke Island—

Will the Minister advise (a) what did the RIS show about job losses and financial impact to tourism and small businesses on the island, (b) which organisations from the island and off-island were consulted about the phase-out - Quandamooka (QYAC, other), North Stradbroke Island Chamber of Commerce, QSIA, MBSIA, other, and were they supportive and (c) if the Minister's decision is final to shut down all of the net fishing licences used on North Stradbroke Island?

ANSWER:

Please note that the premise of the Member's question is incorrect. Commercial netting operations on North Stradbroke Island will not be directly or adversely impacted by the phasing out of gillnet fishing in the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area or the Great Sandy Marine Park. A new "N15" symbol will be issued to eligible net fishers with history in the region to allow them to continue fishing. Additionally, N10 and K1-8 operations will continue to operate as they have previously with an as-of-right access to the N15 fishery.

To ensure the Queensland Government can meet its commitments to UNESCO, an exemption from a Regulatory Impact Statement was given for amendments to fisheries regulations to give effect to Great Barrier Reef related commitments to UNESCO regarding the phasing out of gillnet fishing. The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries (DAF) will conduct a post implementation review in consultation with the industry and key stakeholders.

The fishers may be eligible for a payment through the Queensland Rural Industry Development Authority for loss in value in their licence due to the change in fishery area between N1/N2 symbols and the fishery area of the N15 symbol. The fishery area of the N15 symbol will be the same as "management region 5" in the East Coast Inshore Fishery, which represents the tidal waters from Baffle Creek south to the New South Wales border.

The Future Fishing Taskforce invited key stakeholders, including representatives from the commercial and recreational fishing sectors, the conservation sector and scientific experts to present at various meetings to aid deliberations. Affected commercial fishers and interested members of the community were also invited to make submissions to the Taskforce via the DAF eHub. More than 100 submissions were received through the eHub from commercial fishers, recreational fishers, conservation organisations and First Nations peoples.

In general, there has been broad support from community. Some concerns were raised including:

- direct loss of income to their fishing business;

- the need to buy back various commercial fishing assets, including equipment such as nets, quota, fishery symbols, vessels and other ancillary equipment used for fishing;
- flow-on impacts to seafood related businesses; and
- effort shift into other fisheries or species of recreational importance.

The Queensland Government acknowledges the difficulties the commercial fishing industry is facing. However, the Government remains committed to protecting the Great Barrier Reef, while transitioning to a more sustainable fishing and aquaculture industry that will provide good jobs now and into the future.