



Hon Bill Byrne MP
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and
Minister for Sport and Racing

Reference: CTS24092/15

12 OCT 2015

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Ms Jennifer Howard MP
Chair
Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Ms Howard

I refer to the Agriculture and Environment Committee Report Number 8 of the 55th Parliament into the *Fisheries and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No.1) 2015*.

I thank the committee for the report and I would like to respond to the two requests for clarification sought in the report.

Request for clarification 1: *The Committee invites the Minister to clarify, for the information of the House, the consultation processes undertaken with stakeholders during the development of the Government's Sustainable Fishing policy, which includes the establishment of net-free fishing zones.*

The Palaszczuk Government took a commitment to the last election to establish three net free fishing zones; one in Cairns, one near Seaforth to the north of Mackay and one along the Capricorn Coast including Keppel Bay and the Fitzroy River.

A consultation process from May to July this year sought input into the boundaries of the three zones. In excess of 6,000 submissions were received with 90 per cent expressing support for the introduction of three zones as proposed. After consideration of all submissions and the views of stakeholders, some changes were made to the final boundaries for the Seaforth and Capricorn Coast zones.

Request for clarification 2: *The Committee invites the Minister to clarify, for the information of the House, what steps his department will take to gather base-line data on the populations of fish and other species in the net free zones, and on recreational fishing activity for monitoring the future success of the zones and managing their impacts.*

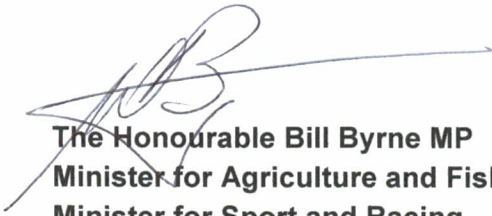
I have requested that the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries establish a monitoring program for the three net free zones that will be able to show both changes in fish populations within the zones and changes to recreational fishing activity within the zones over time. I have recently approved an appropriate program and it is due to commence in the near future.

With respect to the monitoring of species other than fish, such as dugong, I can advise this is not within my portfolio responsibilities, but a matter for the Minister for Environment and Heritage Protection and Minister for National Parks and the Great Barrier Reef. I understand there are existing monitoring programs already in place for many of these iconic species.

I trust this information provides that clarification sought by the Committee.

If your Office requires any further information, please contact Mr Elliot Stein, Chief of Staff, in my Office on telephone 07 3719 7560.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'B Byrne', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The Honourable Bill Byrne MP
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and
Minister for Sport and Racing
Member for Rockhampton