



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

Reference: CTS 22416/15

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Mr Neil Laurie
The Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Services
Parliament House
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 17 September 2015 about petition number 2420-15 received by the House on 16 September 2015 concerning the establishment of three net free fishing zones in Queensland.

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. Since forming Government the implementation of these zones has also become a commitment Australia has made to the international community by being incorporated into *The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*, endorsed by the State and Federal Governments and submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

The Queensland Government recognises that commercial fishing businesses will be impacted as a direct result of the introduction of the net free zones. To assist commercial net fishers adjust to the new arrangements, the Government will fund a \$10 million buyback and settlement scheme aimed at mitigating these impacts through the provision of financial assistance.

The buyback scheme will aim to reduce the overall number of commercial fishing licences so as to prevent commercial fishing effort being displaced into other areas. A settlement scheme will provide commercial fishers directly affected by the zones' introduction with a payment which will be based on their historic effort in these areas.

The assistance provided to the commercial fishing industry through these schemes is likely to be in excess of the amount of compensation the Government is obliged to provide in accordance with the *Fisheries Act 1994*.

To ensure the Queensland community will continue to be able to access locally caught seafood, it is intended that commercial trawling, line fishing and crabbing will be able to continue within the boundaries of the proposed net free zones. Outside of these areas, the regulations which apply to the commercial net fishing sector will remain unchanged. As a consequence, the ability of the Queensland fishing industry is on balance still expected to be capable of providing Queenslanders with access to locally caught seafood.

I would also like to reinforce that the Government's Sustainable Fishing Policy recognises there is a role for all fishing sectors in Queensland. The establishment of the three net free zones is a means of formally recognising and developing the important economic contribution that recreational fishing can make to tourism and regional Queensland communities.

I trust this information is of assistance to petitioners.

Yours sincerely

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

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