



Speech by

Dr Mark Robinson

MEMBER FOR CLEVELAND

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FISHERIES AMENDMENT REGULATION (NO. 1) 2010: DISALLOWANCE OF STATUTORY INSTRUMENT

 **Dr ROBINSON** (Cleveland—LNP) (7.44 pm): I second the motion to stop Labor's current snapper ban. When it comes to fishing, this Labor government has more closures than Rugs a Million. This snapper ban is another closing-down sellout. When there is a fishing issue that needs addressing, Labor's first instinct is to ban someone, ban something or ban access to some area. Since real Labor fishing men like Tom Burns retired, and since Labor became dependent on the Greens to form government, this government has been invaded by a toxic green algal policy bloom. It has become ban mad and closure crazy. Their DNA has become to shut out, close, ban, lock up and deny access to marine areas. Closure has become Labor's default position on fisheries management, a one-solution-fits-all approach to fishing pressure. We saw it in Moreton Bay first where there has been the unpopular green zone closures and now today a new species-specific ban, a snapper ban.

Let me digress briefly and acknowledge recreational fishers in the gallery here tonight and also those who are watching online. They are the witnesses of Labor's sellout of Queensland's 750,000 recreational fishers and boaties. The government initially attempted to bring in the six-week snapper ban by stealth by introducing it just days before Christmas. It did this to avoid public scrutiny under the Christmas radar. Tonight Labor MPs cannot hide. They will have to stand for something: either for or against fishing.

Let me be clear: the LNP is committed to sustainable fishing, to protecting our precious fish stock and all marine life, but unlike this government we are also committed to protecting the rights of individuals to fish sustainably. The LNP opposes this ban for many reasons. Firstly, the science does not unequivocally conclude that snapper are overfished and that closures are required in Queensland waters. Dr Barry Pollock, a fisheries scientist and chairman of Sunfish Queensland, the peak recreational fishing body in Queensland, stated that the latest scientific review found that the exact status of snapper stocks is uncertain due to the limitations of available data and that it is misleading for the minister to state unequivocally that snapper stocks are severely depleted. While phone-polling the public may have given an indication of community views, it is not the hard evidence needed to make long-term and far-reaching environmental, economic and social decisions that impact on our coastal lifestyles, businesses and industries. Further, the government's claim is contradicted by the evidence of good snapper catches by recreational fishers, a fact not given sufficient consideration by Fisheries Queensland. I call on the government tonight to commit to a more intensive program of recreational fishing data collection to better inform management decisions and thus to lift the current ban.

Secondly, Queensland's peak fishing bodies condemn the Labor snapper ban. The peak recreational fishing bodies—Sunfish, ECOfishers and the Charter Boat Association here in Queensland—do not support the government's snapper ban.

Thirdly, government departments contradict each other about the value of bans on snapper management. Of the previous marine park closures, DERM have stated that these park closures benefited

the snapper, while at the same time DEEDI have said that they did not. So we see confusion and contradiction by government departments themselves about the status of the snapper stock.

Fourthly, the snapper ban itself will not produce any significant environmental benefit as snapper are out of season at this time of year. A ban will not have the government's aim of significantly reducing environmental impacts on snapper because they are not in season. This is a crazy time of the year to introduce a snapper ban if the government thinks a ban is going to somehow reduce the fishing pressure on snapper. It is crazy and makes no sense at all.

Fifthly, the current ban is causing great damage to tourism and marine-dependent small businesses in coastal Queensland areas. Recreational fishers consistently expend significant amounts of funds in fishing related tourism. But many of them have parked their boats in their backyards for the period of the ban. They are not buying the petrol, bait, tackle, rods, food and drinks that they would normally buy from the petrol stations, tackle stores and corner stores. Other Queensland snapper fishers are heading across the border to New South Wales where they can fish for snapper, spending their money in New South Wales instead of Queensland.

This is the wrong time to introduce another economically unsustainable fishing ban, when tourism and small business are trying to recover from the summer floods. It is like kicking Queenslanders when they are already down. Where have we heard that before? If the Premier can postpone implementing other actions to assist people getting over the floods, why can't she defer the pain for the fishing sector and marine industries devastated by the floods? The Labor snapper bans will not save fish, but fishing businesses in Queensland will be lost.

Sixthly, the current six-week ban is feared to be a precursor to bigger and more devastating bans. It is quite possible that this closure-addicted Labor government will impose a four-month ban on snapper fishing, starting as early as June 2011 and at the latest probably June 2012, and continuing every year while ever they hold the belief that the snapper stock is overfished. Of the current snapper RIS being considered, four-month snapper bans are one of the major elements being suggested in several of these options. I am sure it would be useful for Labor members who are concerned about this and my statements to read their own documents and learn about what their government is very likely to bring in, because they are voting on it tonight. Like the softening up of an artillery barrage before the main assault, this ban is the start of something much worse. It is politically motivated to display to the Greens in Queensland, in the lead-up to the next election, that the government is serious about putting closure capital on the table to earn the preference deal that the Bligh government cannot win without.

In conclusion, the current Labor snapper ban and future Labor snapper bans are not the bans that we had to have. I join with Dr Barry Pollack and urge the state government to reconsider the validity of this extreme and unwarranted management plan, as he calls it, and to instead use sensible management measures, not bans, so that the snapper stay sustainable. Through this motion the LNP calls on the government to stop the ban tonight. I second the shadow minister's motion.