



Speech By
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MEMBER FOR THEODORE

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FISHERIES (SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES STRATEGY) AMENDMENT BILL

 **Mr BOOTHMAN** (Theodore—LNP) (12.44 pm): I rise to speak on the Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018. I would like to thank the committee for their work on this bill and the recommendations that they put forward.

A thriving seafood industry has always been part of the Queensland lifestyle. Nothing beats eating fish and chips wrapped in butcher's paper. Back in the old days it was wrapped in newspapers and you would end up reading some of the old columns. There was a bit of *deja vu* about it. It was a memory trail back then. Nothing beats eating fish and chips on a Sunday afternoon by the water or taking the good old tinnie out to a special fishing spot to catch the evening meal.

For many Queenslanders, catching the ideal fish is a closely guarded secret as their livelihoods depend on it. Yet it is no secret that Queensland's commercial fishing industry has been in decline over the past 20 years. An industry once proud has become a mere shadow of itself.

On this side of the chamber, we know the importance of supporting our commercial fishers and obtaining the right balance between their rights to make a living and the environment. It is positive to see many aspects of this bill adhere to the recommendations of *Taking stock: modernising fisheries management in Queensland*, commissioned by the LNP in 2014.

Unfortunately, for those in the industry, especially the small commercial fishing operators, this new legislation does cause deep concerns. There have been numerous examples of faulty vessel monitoring system responders. This includes concerns about the durability and reliability of these systems in certain conditions.

The livelihood of commercial fishers relies on the known productive fishing grounds that they fish to ensure they get a good catch. The mere idea of big brother looking over their shoulder and recording this information about these locations is unsettling, as it could result in the government using this information to fulfil its left agenda by placing a green zone over these locations or this information also could be leaked and therefore, again, hasten the demise of this once proud industry.

These locations are intellectual property. It potentially takes years of trial and error to find the most productive fishing grounds. A good commercial fisher takes care of these productive fishing grounds to ensure that they are productive for years to come. Yet the penalties in this bill associated with protecting this important recorded information are sadly lacking. Therefore, if an individual's prime fishing location is illegally distributed or misused, it has the potential to destroy that individual's business and livelihood.

The maximum penalty for illegally disclosing vessel tracking data is 50 penalty points, or a mere \$6,527.57. Putting this into perspective, if a commercial fisher is found guilty of breaching the VMS compliance, they will face a maximum penalty of 1,000 penalty points, or \$130,550.

We all agree that it is critically important to combat black market activities in the seafood industry to ensure the viability of the industry for generations to come. Therefore, I agree with recommendation 2 of the committee, which states—

The committee recommends the Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries review the definition of 'commercial quantity' as it relates to the offence of trafficking in priority fish to a threshold that is significantly lower than five times the recreational limit or weight equivalent.

I agree with the member for Condamine's comments that three or four times the limit is not a mistake; it is an intentional violation.

Only yesterday members in this chamber debated the Human Rights Bill, yet I find it interesting that when it comes to the powers of the department to investigate unlawful catches it has more powers than a police officer. For example, a police officer is required to obtain a warrant to enter the premises of what they suspect is a drug-manufacturing facility, yet fisheries inspectors do not need a warrant. We need to ensure that our fishing industry remains a key cornerstone of our Queensland lifestyle, but I do wish the minister would listen to the committee's recommendations and implement them.