

Queensland Parliament Hansard Green

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SUBJECT: (no subject found)

MEMBER: Mrs LAUGA

 **Mrs LAUGA** (Keppel—ALP) (6.13 pm): I rise this evening to oppose this motion as moved by the member for Gympie. It is clear that this disallowance motion is a reflection of the problem that sits at the rotting heart of the LNP. They have yet to grasp that the purpose of opposition is to hold the government to account and to contribute to the public discourse in a way that promotes good policy and that delivers good outcomes for the Queensland people. Under the leadership of the member for Nanango, however, that function has degenerated into the mediocrity of opposition for its own sake.

The opposition's election plan is quite simply to throw enough mud and hope like crazy that some of it will stick: vexatious allegations, disallowance motions on regulations that have already been amended—oh but then that motion was withdrawn at the last minute because it took them so long to work out that they were trying to disallow regulations that had already been amended weeks ago—not to mention wasting the parliament's time with frivolous divisions on the business program each and every week, \$7 billion of unfunded election commitments with no plans or transparency to the public whatsoever about how taxpayers will fund their own thought bubbles, and the list goes on. Queenslanders expect that the opposition exercises oversight of the actions of the government, but the LNP opposition is not making Queensland a better state and this parliament more robust. They are quite literally impeding Queensland's progress and this parliament's productivity.

It was 2016 when the then federal LNP Attorney-General, George Brandis, labelled the member for Clayfield and the LNP state opposition as very, very mediocre. What we are witnessing from those opposite, tonight included, is far from mediocre. In fact, it is incompetence and the motion tonight is evidence of just how incapable and unfit to govern they are. It is disappointing that the member for Gympie did not consider the entirety of the fisheries sector when the motion was moved to disallow these fisheries regulations. I speak specifically of Queensland's charter fishing sector. The disallowance of these regulations will sink all of Queensland's charter fishers. To have over 350 charter fishing operators stuck on dock by the LNP's move to disallow these regulations is a disgrace. I would find it surprising if the opposition even sought the views of the charter sector when their industry-destroying measure was thought up.

Queensland's charter industry is worth \$94 million. That includes multiple fishing charter businesses in Keppel. That is \$94 million that will 'get away' to other states if this disallowance succeeds. Queenslanders, tourists to Queensland and international visitors who partake in charter fishing will be left high and dry because of the LNP if this motion is passed. I support our charter fishing sector in Keppel, and in Queensland more broadly, and that is why I will be opposing this motion this evening.

To have an entire industry destroyed because the opposition does not understand fisheries is unfathomable. This disallowance motion will strip away charter fishing licences and leave charter fishers without an authority to undertake their business. I would like to acknowledge the great work that has been done by the Minister for Fisheries in promoting the charter fishing sector. One of Labor's election commitments was the development of a charter fishing action plan. It was a plan that was welcomed by the sector because the sector had an opportunity to have their say, just as the entirety of the fisheries sector have had their say on what is in these regulations that the opposition is attempting to disallow.

It was noted that public feedback to a discussion paper in 2017 found overwhelming public support for greater recognition and engagement of the charter fishing sector, and the minister at the time stated that the Charter Fishing Action Plan was developed in consultation with Queensland's 344 licensed charter operators and the government would work with industry to implement the plan. Earlier this year, parliament approved changes to the Fisheries Act to specifically recognise the charter sector in the legislation, acknowledging their important role in our community and regions.

As I mentioned earlier, there are local, Australian and international visitors who want to engage with charter fishing in the beautiful waters of Queensland—just like in my backyard, the Southern Great Barrier Reef—who have the opportunity to target game fish, visit areas of Queensland few in this House

will ever see or even just be out on the water away from their day jobs. It is important for a government to support this sector.

The government is also progressing reforms as part of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027 which will ensure healthy fish stocks that underpin a world-class charter industry. Yet the main opposition to these fisheries reforms—not just now but in the past—have been the Liberal National Party in Queensland. I will not even place the entirety of the blame at the current Leader of the Opposition, as the opposition to fisheries began under Campbell Newman. I guess that is one slippery fish that the LNP is glad got away!

In 2014, the then minister for fisheries had the completed MRAG report on his desk. It should be noted that the MRAG report is quite a good report, and it notes—

The systems that have evolved over time to manage and share access to Queensland's fish stocks are, by any measure, exceedingly complex and inadequate to deal with the modern challenges faced by its fisheries.

Maybe the recommendations were too complex for the LNP, as they refused to table the report—and no doubt it would have been sunk without a trace unless Labor had won the 2015 election. The report saw the light of day, and many of the recommendations were adopted as part of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. Thank goodness! I would advise the opposition, and in particular the shadow minister, to read that report.

048 The next opposition to fisheries, which benefited tourism and charter operators, came from the current Leader of the Opposition. It should surprise no-one that the opposition also sought to disallow the net-free zones which have proved incredibly popular in these regions. I spoke in this place against that disallowance motion in the last term of parliament. The then Cleveland—renamed Oodgeroo—LNP MP, Mark Robinson, supported the proposal for net-free zones and was quoted in the media as saying—

The proper rollout of net-free zones will mean plenty of locally caught seafood for all, no price increase in seafood, more sustainable fisheries and extra jobs in Queensland's \$1 billion recreational fishing, boating and tourism industries.

Yet the member for Oodgeroo neglected to show up to vote on that motion and backed net-free zones because his policy was in stark contrast to his own party's policy. It is a wonder that the state LNP branch did not move to have him disendorsed prior to the 2017 state election because of his alternate view, as we know the LNP in Queensland has a history of doing.

As someone who fishes on a regular basis, I can confirm that the Rockhampton and Capricorn Coast net-free zone is incredibly popular with locals and visitors alike. It is making a huge difference to barramundi and threadfin salmon stocks in the Fitzroy and Keppel Bay. We are getting closer and closer to the Fitzroy becoming the largest wild barramundi fishery in the world as a result of the net-free zones. The fisheries flip-flop meant that at the 2017 election the LNP said they supported the net-free zones. It would not surprise me if the LNP come out at some future point and say they are supportive of the 350 plus charter operators in this \$94 million industry.

Of course, this motion to destroy that industry by banning their operation entirely will be glossed over, as it is these regulations that allow their business to operate. We want to see the fishing charter industry in Queensland thrive. In fact, we want to see an increase in the number of charter operators in Queensland, more engagement of charter operators in fisheries management, improved satisfaction of charter fishing clients, better data on charter catch, a reduction in the number of permits or approvals required to operate as a charter business and improved certainty for charter operators. Yet if this motion passes, the only certainty is that the industry will be caught out permanently.

I would encourage members of the opposition to carefully consider exactly what is being proposed tonight: the extinguishing of charter fishing in Queensland; ending commercial fishing in Queensland; stopping the recovery of key fisheries; and ignoring the feedback of working groups and expert panels. It will undo five years of progress in fisheries. It will stop access to seafood from Queensland waters to those who want to have local fish and chips. This is a disastrous motion and it should be vocally opposed. Close to one million Queensland recreational fishers will surely remember this motion the next time the LNP claim to care about fishing in Queensland. If the LNP had any sense they would withdraw this motion, as they did the former motion, and support the Palaszczuk government's Sustainable Fisheries Strategy. I oppose this motion.