

**MEDIA RELEASE
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Net Free Zones – Poor Compensation Process

In another first for poor process generated from the Queensland government The Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) understands that State is effectively making the fishers pick “the money or the box” in the so called Net Free Zone (NFZ) compensation scheme.

The State Government is forcing commercial fishers to accept their offers as soon as possible or the fishers will lose their offer under the scheme. This is unfortunately compelling commercial fishers to make a decision on compensation even though many of them are also entitled to compensation under the Fisheries Act 1994. “The primary issue identified by Law Essentials is the limited time commercial fishers have to accept a government offer,” said Eric Perez, QSIA Executive Officer.

‘The NFZs policy undermined the businesses of net fishers in central and north Queensland and were purely introduced as an ALP ‘thank you’ to a sub-set of recreational fishing zealots for their support at the 2015 State election. The speeches delivered on 14 October in the Queensland Parliament by ALP members gave industry some marginal hope that compensation would be appropriate – its anything but appropriate’ said Mr Perez.

Many Commercial fishers may get more compensation under the Fisheries Act, however, as noted by Law Essentials, without a crystal ball as to the amount they will get under the Fisheries Act, many cannot risk losing their offered amount under the compensation scheme.

‘How many times can you kick an industry while it’s down Minister? How long do you intend to stretch the real pain caused to commercial fishing families? Finally, perhaps some real leadership is needed here – the kind of leadership that has been lacking from the State government on fisheries management. Open every compensation avenue that are legitimately available to industry Minister, it is the very least you can do’, said Mr Perez.

ENDS

Further Information:

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Attachment – Letter from Law Essentials to:

Honourable Premier. Anastacia Palaszczuk MP
Honourable Minister, Bill Byrne MP