



16 March 2020

Hon Anastacia Palaszczuk
Premier
PO Box 15185
CITY EAST QLD 4002

Dear Premier

Re: Relationship between the State Government and recreational fishing groups

On behalf of the Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSLA) I have questions regarding the relationship between the State Government and recreational fishing groups. Please note that Attachments 1 and 2 were downloaded from the Bush 'n Beach Fishing Magazine Facebook page and website respectively. Attachment 3 is an email sent by CAREFISH to politicians, conservation and industry groups.

Since the start of the so-called fisheries reform process many commercial fishers have asked if the process was (1) a pre-determined exercise; and (2) managed by the State Government with input from recreational groups.

The following quote from Attachment 1 suggests an existing agreement between Government and recreational fishing groups, *'They have been ready to go for a year and were promised by last December at the latest. Many of us have been trying to resolve this quietly and internally without any successes. Many commercial fishers have been doing the same, environmentalists too. Next will be the Science sector'*.

It is difficult to comprehend the arguments posed in the Bush 'n Beach Fishing Magazine Facebook page and website suggesting that the recreational sector is over-regulated. Recreational fishers are not monitored to the degree commercial fishers are, they do not have to account for any catch via logbooks and their effort remains a guess at best. Industry pays for access to the resource and for the right to sell to the public.

The following table provides a simple comparison between sectors regarding the differences in fisheries management applied by the State Government.

Regulation	Recreational Fishing	Commercial Fishing
Vessel Monitoring Systems (VMS)	x	✓
Logbooks	x	✓
Licence fees (Fisheries Queensland Fees, Safe Food Production Queensland)	x	✓

The number of recreational fishers is growing at an alarming rate with no strict cap on effort as part of the so-called fisheries reform process. The amount of pressure on the fisheries resource and the environment coming from this State's recreational sector is unknown. If you believe we have 943,000 individuals who self-identify as recreational fishers why have their impacts escaped the attention of our fisheries management?

Again, for your consideration, Attachment 3 notes the following, '*We're sickened by the ancient anti-reform commercial lobby*'. My Association has engaged with the so-called fisheries reform process and brought to the attention of industry and community as follows:

- A poorly structured consultation process;
- No regulatory impact statement;
- No modelling of the financial implications of the so-called reforms on any element of the commercial fishing supply chain;
- An underlying consultation approach designed to divide industry and to create the pre-text for the introduction of zoning and quota management;
- The propagation of the lie that our fisheries are on the brink of collapse and only through reform can they be saved for our children and grandchildren;
- The introduction, without scientific research of a 60% biomass target that is ultra-conservative to appease conservation groups. It should be noted that international practice sets biomass set targets between 30-40% while our Commonwealth fisheries aiming for 20%;
- A process that at its core will exclude commercial fishers from accessing the resource by undermining their historical catch; and
- The creation of fisheries working groups that have restricted the dissemination of verbatim meeting minutes and instead industry is provided with vetted communiques. It seems these groups were never meant to challenge policy thinking but were created as a way to legitimise the so-called fisheries reform process. The Association estimates that across the Moreton Bay, Trawl, Crab and Inshore fishery working groups, commercial fishers have lost \$181,000 in income.

These issues have been raised with members, other industry groups and the community as a way to unpack poor and lazy policy making. We are being managed on **speculation, imagination and assumption**.

The Association has used social media and traditional media channels to shine a light on the political nature of fisheries reform in Queensland. Doing so has helped industry and the community to ask – ‘who is managing our fisheries and for who’s benefit?’

Finally, I pose the following questions that flow from the material covered in Attachments 1, 2 and 3, including:

- What, if any, promises regarding the fisheries reform process were developed between the State Government and recreational fishing groups?
- If there has been a ‘deal’ which groups were involved and what were the details?

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence please contact Eric Perez, QSIA CEO on M: 0417 631 353 or E: eo@qsia.com.au.

Regards,



Allan Bobberman

Chair
Queensland Seafood Industry Association

Cc:

1. Hon Mark Furner, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries

Attachment 1

Facebook Extract
Bush 'n Beach Fishing Magazine
March 13 at 11:54 am 2020

URGENT ACTION NEEDED!!! Please share and contact your local MP - Regulations have been imposed on recreational fishos but they have not been implemented for the commercial sector, which they were meant to be as well.

CAREFISH has called out for help. Everyone who has interest in fish and therefore fisheries management has an important and urgent part to play if they ever want to see the modernisation of the antiquated government managed system that currently exists.

The way fish are managed in Qld at the moment is a patchwork of regulation going back to Jo Bjelke days which was based on open harvest i.e. everyone can catch as much as they like, the more the better resulting in massive over-allocation of commercial licences. Clearly that had its limits and over the decades there has been a very noticeable decline in many fish stocks.

This has eventually affected entire communities - pretty well all of them now along the Qld coast. Local fishing clubs have closed all over the state and recreational fishing experience, a healthy activity has declined exactly in line with the steady decline in fishing experience.

No fish, no fun. Commercial fishers also felt the pinch of reduced fish stocks and their profits came under increasing pressure (CPUE). And of course, the environment suffered.

This is not a new problem. As long as I can remember there have been the following major attempts by government to resolve and modernise management.

The history of repeated failure of commercial fishery reforms in QLD

1992- 1996 The Burns Inquiry investigated fisheries over several years and made many recommendations. Most weren't enacted so Major FAIL

2007 – 2012 The Inshore Fin Fish Review (ECIFFF) was an extensive Labor initiated inquiry resulting in 2 stages of reforms ie recreational and commercial, the recreational reforms (bag and boat limits to limit harvest) were enacted, the commercial reforms were not. Labor failed to implement them pre election and so did LNP post election, so complete MAJOR LABOR and LNP FAIL again

2012 – 2014 The Gill Net Buy Back was a LNP scheme aimed to buy back 50% of Qld East Coast gill net licences after LNP FAILED to implement the Stage 2 of the previous commercial reforms. This was at the request of commercial, recreational and charter

fishers as well as the environmental sector. About 30% was eventually bought out, so on those terms, partial LNP FAIL

2015 Net Free Zones. In response to the continuing failure to reform fisheries and in particular commercial over harvest, many regions gave up on trying to fix the big problem and lobbied for an exclusion of commercial harvest activity in their own region. There were 11 applications and 3 were successful. These 3 (Cairns, Mackay and Rocky) have proved without any doubt that the removal of commercial effort results in returned fish abundance and social amenity which supports many industries, pleases the community and probably more importantly, the environment. 3 succeeded, 8 failed, you can judge that one yourself. I call it a partial FAIL

2017 – NOW The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy, again a Labor initiative formulated from the 2014 LNP initiated MRAG Independent Expert Review leading to yet another public inquiry - The Green Paper, and progressing to a major public consultation and bureaucratic and expert investment, a very comprehensive and sophisticated effort, with massive public support, and resulting in 102 amendments to the regulations.

Again, the reforms were to be delivered in 2 stages, recreational ie further harvest limits and these were implemented with rec sector support Sept 2019, and commercial – a comprehensive package including vital Harvest Strategies on key species, Quota and Regional Management promised for December 2019 and still NOT IMPLEMENTED. Complete FAIL

So, you can see from this that the commercial reforms repeatedly FAILED or have fallen well short of the mark.

Once again, we are faced with the prospect of an election interrupting the process. Caretaker mode approaches. Once again, the commercial fishers lobby have successfully terrified the government into shelving the process. Labor has made a decision based on political strategy in the lead up to the October election.

We believe that is a VERY BIG MISTAKE, clearly, they have not correctly considered the ramifications of this, like the coming backlash in the massive recreational sector vote, and we can be certain the environmental sector is not too pleased either. Many commercial fishers are progressive and want the reforms too.

And consider this, the completion of the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy is pivotal to how the World Heritage Authority assesses the Great Barrier Reef, which is a World Heritage listed property, the Action is written in concrete in the Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan – BA 23 under Bio-diversity 4.6. Very recently the WHA listing came within a whisker of being down designated to ‘in danger’. This would have considerable repercussion on the reputation of Australia and its ability to manage its iconic property, and its ability to attract tourists.

Also, if a commercial fisher wishes to export wild native fish to the world, as they do in very large quantities, they need to obtain and maintain a WTO (Wildlife Trade Operation) permit which is managed by the Federal Dept of Environment. The Feds

watch very closely to make sure the state conducts these operations sustainably, and they impose conditions, lots of them. The State has wiggled and wiggled and managed to not comply for a very long time, mostly because of all the failures as detailed above. Many fisheries, like prawn, live trout and cray are on their last gasp, a final 12-month extension, and if these reforms fail again, the results may be catastrophic to those sectors and the businesses involved.

So, in a nutshell, the remaining reforms **MUST BE PASSED THROUGH THE LABOR CABINET NOW**. They have been ready to go for a year and were promised by last December at the latest. Many of us have been trying to resolve this quietly and internally without any successes. Many commercial fishers have been doing the same, environmentalists too. Next will be the Science sector.

What's the hold up? Labor has shelved this reform, bowing to a particular antiquated commercial lobby. There are a dozen dinosaurs there who bellow at any suggestion what-so-ever of reform. But there are a million of us and we need to make our voice clear. Governments rely on the apathy of the recreational fishing sector, and we get manipulated because of it.

This is **YOUR** opportunity to tell the government **"WE WILL NOT BE TREATED LIKE THIS"**

CALL TO ACTION

Send an email today telling **ALL LABOR MP's** what you want. Copy the list below. And do it again tomorrow and everyday day until this matter is resolved.

Attachment 2

Website Extract
Bush 'n Beach Fishing Magazine
March 13, 2020

FOLLOWING a state-wide telephone conference last week, a network of concerned recreational fishing activists issued the following statement:

The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy reforms Queensland Labor PROMISED us to improve our fish stocks appear to have been canned!

Reforms that would have seen fish stock level ultimately raised to those already existing in the Net Free Zones were supposed to be rolled out by last Christmas. Fishers are still waiting – and furious!

Recreational fishers up and down the State are infuriated that further restrictions have been put on THEIR fishing activities and catch, while promised catch caps and reforms on commercial fisheries have STALLED and been seemingly shelved indefinitely. Exactly the same scenario happened back in 2012!

We demand the Government delivers on their promise of fisheries reforms and regulatory amendments required to implement the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy and lock in and announce the date when this happen, well prior to the State election later this year.

These reforms must go through in their entirety, so future fish stocks can be assured and certainty provided to all sectors. These reforms aren't ground-breaking, they are just lifting fisheries management in Queensland to the standards already in place in other States and in Commonwealth fisheries.

We ask ALL concerned fishers to support these concerns by contacting the Minister for Fisheries Mark Furner or their local member.

Attachment 3

QLD LABOR FAIL
REC FISHERS FURIOUS AT QLD LABOR
QLD LABOR ADOPTS ANTI-RECREATIONAL FISHER STANCE IN RUN UP TO
THE OCTOBER ELECTION

The Sustainable Fisheries Strategy reforms that Qld Labor promised us to improve our fish stocks have been canned!

Commercial fishers overjoyed. Remember the promise of 60% Virgin Bio Mass, FORGET IT.

Unbelievably, the exact same Labor reform failure occurred under Bligh 2007 - 2012 as well

RECREATIONAL FISHERS HAVE HAD A GUT FULL ONCE AGAIN Take Note Qld Labor power brokers "We will NOT cop it AGAIN!!"

- QLD LABOR has BROKEN AN ELECTION PROMISE to us once again FAILING once again to deliver critical commercial fishery reforms - guaranteeing the rebuilding of our dwindling fish stocks CAN NOT COMMENCE.
- Recreational fishers up and down the State are absolutely furious that further restrictions have been put on recreational fishing activities once again, while commercial fishery reforms have been shelved once again.
- These reforms are not ground-breaking, they are just lifting antiquated fisheries management in Queensland to modern standards already in place in other States and Commonwealth fisheries as well as world-wide, even in third world countries

WHAT WE WANT

- We demand the Government deliver on its election promise of implementing fisheries reforms and regulatory amendments required under the Sustainable Fisheries Strategy.
- We demand QLD LABOR pass all the remaining Regulatory Amendments through cabinet and into law and publicly announce the date when this will happen. Time is of the essence as we head toward the caretaker pre-election period.
- ALL Recreational fishers have been working constructively towards this reform process for over 5 years to fix 50 years of terrible fisheries management practices allowing uncontrolled commercial harvesting of many of our precious species.

We're sickened by the ancient anti-reform commercial lobby and the obvious undemocratic QLD LABOR factional power imbalance governing QLD for their mates

CALL TO ACTION – EVERY RECREATIONAL FISHER IN QLD – DO THIS NOW
CALL your local MP right now and tell them “We will not accept it. Finish the process now or we’ll meet you at the polls”.

THIS IS NOT NEGOTIABLE

Send all Qld MP’s a quick email today, and tomorrow too and every day up to polling day if you have to. Copy this letter and add you own thoughts.

Tell your MP’s what you want, that’s what they are there for! Following is a data list of all sitting Labor MP’s.

CAREFISH