

**MEDIA RELEASE
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QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT “REGULATING THE FISHING INDUSTRY OUT OF EXISTENCE”

GASLIGHTING, unprincipled and un-Australian are some of the key sentiments underpinning the Queensland Seafood Industry Association’s (QSIA) response to comments about the seafood industry by the Queensland Government. QSIA Chief Executive Officer Eric Perez said today the State Government seemed determined to “regulate the industry out of existence”.

This follows the receipt of correspondence citing problems experienced by the commercial fishing industry during the COVID-19 pandemic and recession were caused by allegations of low profitability and a need to modernise. “Everyone in the industry knows ‘low profitability’ is an excuse to further reduce numbers of commercial fishermen permitted to operate in Queensland,” Mr Perez said.

“The so-called reform process will lead to coastal zoning, limiting where we can fish commercially, and the introduction of quota, limiting how much we can harvest. Both these measures will severely hamper the efficiency of fishing operations, would never be accepted in other natural resource industries like farming, and are based not on science but on political ideology and prejudice.

“The anti-commercial fisher reforms have stifled industry investment – why would industry invest when our catch will be limited by quota and coastal zoning?

“On what basis are claims made on my industry’s profitability? The Queensland Government refused to undertake an assessment of the impacts of the reform along the seafood supply chain.

“No-one predicted the impact of COVID-19 and those impacts are still being felt across the economy. No-one has undertaken any analysis of the profitability of my industry but, more critically, who are the faceless bureaucrats and this Minister to say what constitutes profitability? How many commercial fishing businesses has the Minister poured his heart and soul into?

“It is an act of cowardice to equate the impacts of COVID-19 on my industry as being caused by excessive numbers or a need to ‘modernise’. Industry has a right to feel enraged when outright lies about our profitability and our ongoing work to keep our fishing techniques as modern as humanly possible are used to suggest we should be reformed.

Mr Perez said retailers throughout Queensland were reporting continued strong consumer demand for wild-caught local seafood but fisheries policies will have an anti-industry impact.

“Queensland consumers want local seafood and instead of helping maximise the availability of seafood our State Government is more than willing to throw the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to introduce some of the most poorly conceived fisheries management legislation” said Mr Perez.

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