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## **LEADERSHIP LACKING ACROSS QUEENSLAND FISHERIES**

UNBELIEVABLE incompetence comes to mind with the news that by 30 September the East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery will lose its export accreditation. ‘Commercial fishers across Queensland are asking how did we end up in the current situation and the answer is complicated but when you dig just a little some unsettling issues are easily identifiable’ said Eric Perez, Chief Executive Officer, Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA).

“Exports form part of the overall industry structure of Queensland commercial fisheries and the potential financial implications are not yet known. The situation exporters are facing should never have come to pass given that the Queensland government had more than two years to meet their obligations under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999 (EPBC Act).

The potential introduction of quota management and zoning may be part of the State’s plan to meet its obligations for the East Coast Inshore Finfish Fishery but you can achieve a change in management without crippling the commercial fishers by introducing both quota and zoning.

“From the start of the so-called reform process commercial fishers were open to at least discussing reform but over the last 3 years industry has been dealing with management by political ideology and pandering to radical recreational fishing and environmental groups” said Mr Perez.

“Some key questions from the situation facing this industry: (1) Is the Minister and/or Fisheries Queensland incompetent? (2) Did the Minister and/or Fisheries Queensland delay compliance on purpose and why?

“The State Government and Fisheries Queensland have a lot to answer for and so far, we have no answers.

“What the Association will not accept is the forced introduction of quota management and zoning into our commercial fisheries without a fight and this current situation hardens our resolve to take the fight to government on behalf of industry along with other commercial fishing bodies because it’s commercial fishers and the consumer that will be losers from fisheries management that is less than world class” said Mr Perez.

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