



Speech By
Dale Last

MEMBER FOR BURDEKIN

Record of Proceedings, 12 February 2019

FISHERIES (VESSEL TRACKING) AMENDMENT REGULATION

Disallowance of Statutory Instrument

 **Mr LAST** (Burdekin—LNP) (6.22 pm): I rise to speak in support of the motion to disallow the vessel monitoring system amendment regulation. There have been many words used to describe this regulation: shambles, debacle, fiasco, and the list goes on. To say that this regulation has been poorly implemented would be an understatement. What makes it worse is that this legislation is yet another case of this government selling out Queenslanders to appease green groups.

On face value, a reasonable person would think that the intention of the legislation is to ensure the long-term sustainability of the commercial fishery in Queensland. One could be forgiven for thinking that this legislation might also be about ensuring the safety of workers in the commercial fishing sector. After all, these are men and women who often work in isolated areas and they, like all workers in Queensland, deserve a safe work environment.

It does little to ensure sustainability and even less to ensure the safety of workers in the sector. Unfortunately, commercial fishers are easy targets and that is because they are already so heavily regulated. Make no mistake: this legislation has caused a lot of angst in the fishing industry. I have been inundated with complaints from commercial fishermen in my electorate who are beyond frustrated with the problems this legislation has caused. They have brought in their faulty transponders and burnt-out wiring on units, and they have told me time and time again of the difficulties when these units malfunction and they can no longer go out to work. That is their livelihood, and their livelihood is being directly impacted by this legislation and the way it has been implemented.

Just like we saw with the vegetation management debacle, consultation was nothing but a buzzword. Departmental staff fronted meetings of commercial fishers without finalised information. The regulatory impact statement? Well, there wasn't one. This government wants to be seen as saving the environment, when the implementation of this legislation is more like a viewing of *Finding Nemo*. Regulations were passed without penalties, there are authorised suppliers who cannot be contacted and VMS units that just do not work.

Instead of providing some form of safety net, this legislation has placed commercial fishers in danger. Wiring that is not designed for a marine environment could easily have led to a tragedy, but does the minister recognise the problem? No. Just like Dory, the minister blindly follows. Well, Minister, in the words of Nemo 'it's not funny.' Well-respected commercial fishers have seen their livelihoods threatened because this government blindly follows the instructions of green activist groups. A proud industry that provided the best seafood in Australia—if not the world—has been hobbled by this government and tied in knots by a minister who does not understand fishing.

Instead, the minister says that this legislation is designed to protect the environment. As is the case with the graziers in our state, the environment is the most precious resource our commercial fishers have. Instead of working cooperatively and embracing the vast knowledge our fishers have, this

government has turned a blind eye whilst steering yet another Queensland industry closer and closer to the brink of destruction. This legislation will do nothing to prevent illegal fishing. The law-abiding fishers will install faulty systems and put themselves and their families at risk whilst the illegal operators continue doing what they have always done: disregard the law.

The absurdity does not end there. As anyone who has taken the time to speak to a commercial fisher would know, the value of their business is in the knowledge they have. You would think that a government that wants an industry to flourish would acknowledge that. Not this government. As a commercial fisher it is mandatory for you to install a VMS unit. You bear the ongoing costs. Commercial fishers should be able to sell the data back to managers, not the other way around. The commercial fishers that I have spoken to value our environment and the fishery they work in. Without the fishery they do not have a business or a job. Commercial fishers have nothing to hide. They are proud, hardworking Queenslanders. They do not deserve to be forced to carry dangerous transponders installed by shonky suppliers.

They do deserve a full and proper review of this legislation and a properly implemented rollout. They deserve to feel safe as they go about their work, not scared that the unit this government told them to install is rubbish. If the minister is so sure that these units and this system are suitable, speak to the commercial fishers around Karumba or other areas. They often live and work in remote and isolated areas, and mobile phone coverage in many of those areas is patchy at best. Would the minister put his family in a boat fitted with one of those units? No, he would not, so why is he asking commercial fishers in Queensland to put their families at risk?

In closing I say to the minister: stop the rollout immediately and review the program. Our commercial fishing operators deserve better. They deserve to be safe at work and they deserve proper consultation and respect. They certainly do not deserve this shambles.