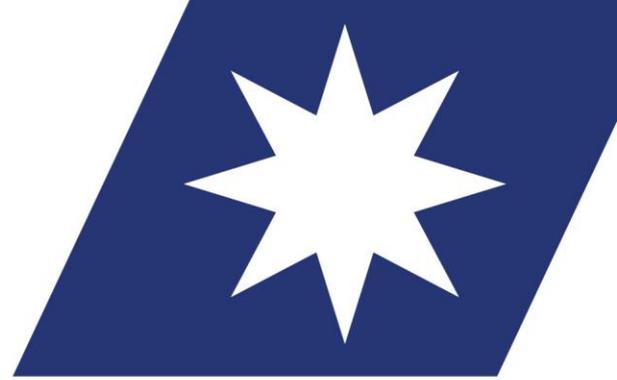


NICK DAMETTO

Member for Hinchinbrook



MEDIA RELEASE

12/02/2019

Commercial operators cut adrift by Labor

A DRACONIAN regulation which enforces the use of tracking systems on fishing vessels has been upheld by Labor despite efforts by Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto to have it quashed.

The State Government used its numbers tonight to vote down a disallowance motion of the Fisheries (Vessel Tracking) Amendment Regulation 2018, which was quietly passed last November and required all crab, line and net fishers to have vessel tracking technology installed and operational by January 1, 2019.

The Department of Agriculture and Fisheries will also make it compulsory to have vessel tracking installed on the remainder of the commercial fishing fleet, including licensed charter operators, by January 1, 2020.

Mr Dametto said Labor had shown “total arrogance and contempt for Queensland’s commercial charter and fishing industry” in refusing to repeal the amendment.

“Once again we see the tentacles of Big Brother slowly destroying yet another primary industry, reaching into the back pockets of hardworking Queenslanders by making them pay for a Vessel Management System,” he said.

“If any of the MPs who voted down this disallowance motion today even bothered to spend five minutes talking with a commercial boat operator they would realise how unnecessary this vessel tracking requirement is.

“It just makes life that much harder financially for these operators and threatens their future viability.”

In a speech given on the disallowance motion given in parliament, Mr Dametto feared the government had more sinister intentions with the implementation of VMS.

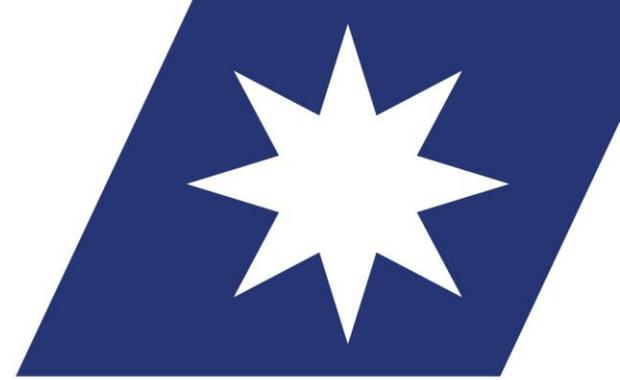
“The industry has no reason to trust the government. Every time they hear from them it’s to take something else away. Why is it necessary to be collecting every vessel’s movements? I can only assume this information will be later used as evidence to squeeze out even more operators,” he said.

“This regulation has been rushed and rammed down their throats, with a put up or shut up attitude from government...VMS will not only affect the commercial fishing industry but we will see this rolled out across the board for tour operators that partake in game fishing or sportfishing charters. Once again, small business is being affected, in many cases sole traders trying to help build a tourism industry are being dragged into this fiasco.”

Mr Dametto cautioned the government against viewing smaller operators in the same light as the larger commercial fishing and trawling operations, calling for a quota cut-off that would determine the need to install a VMS unit.

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“This would be quite beneficial in reducing financial pressures for the smaller operators and would reduce the amount of people needing to own and operate a Vessel Management System,” he said.

“I don’t agree that game fishing and tourism operations should need to carry and use VMS and they should be excluded from this regulation. Most game and fishing tour operators promote catch and release and when they take home a catch it’s no greater than a recreational fisherman.”

The proposed Fisheries (Sustainable Fisheries Strategy) Amendment Bill 2018 will make it an offence to not have approved vessel tracking equipment installed and working properly and an offence to interfere with the operation of a Vessel Management System (VMS). The maximum penalty for each of these offences is 1000 penalty units or about \$130,550.

Mr Dametto said the enforcement of VMS on smaller vessels and the penalties for not complying were “outrageous”.

“Labor is trying to actively kill off our fishing and charter industry. We need to remember these are hard-working people who are already struggling to make ends meet. If sustainability means pushing mum and dad operators out of business, then congratulations. To have them lumped together with large-scale commercial fishing boats is just wrong.”

—ENDS—

Media Enquiries

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