

**ROBBIE KATTER**

Member for Traeger



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### COMPENSATION THE ONLY FAIR WAY FORWARD FOR FISHERS: KAP

Katter's Australian Party MPs have called on Queensland Minister for Fisheries Mark Furner to apologise for his claim that the allegedly dire state of the east coast Spanish mackerel was the result of "overfishing" and have demanded he commit to compensating commercial fishers impacted by any forthcoming cuts to annual catch quotas.

Last week at Budget Estimates in Brisbane, Mr Furner claimed there was no legal requirement for the State Government to compensate fishers whose livelihoods are likely to be decimated by quota cuts, which could be as severe as up to 90 per cent of the previous take.

"On determining whether compensation should be paid or not be paid, my understanding is that, because this matter is as a result of the overfished status of the species, financial compensation is not payable under the legislation," the Minister said.

Katter's Australian Party Leader and Traeger MP Robbie Katter said the Minister's claim was demonstrably false as the commercial fishing sector had complied with the quotas put in place by Fisheries Queensland since 2005.

He said the only way overfishing could have occurred was as a result of the State Government's management, or rather mismanagement, of the fishery.

"The quota for Spanish mackerel was introduced in 2004-05 with a 619-tonne commercial limit – it has been slightly reduced since then, and the quota has never been reached let alone exceeded," Mr Katter said.

"Queensland's commercial sector have only ever caught about 50 per cent of the quota allocated to them, so whatever has gone wrong with this fishery is not on them.

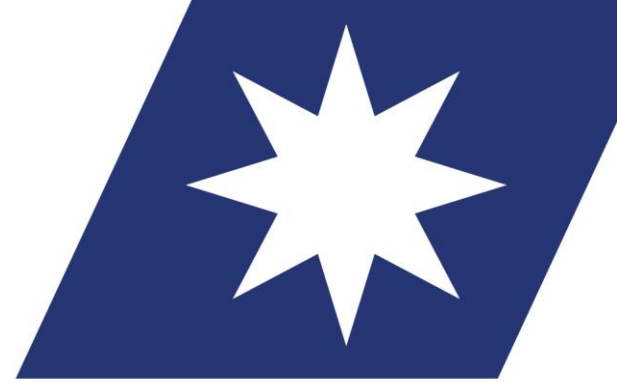
"As recently as 2016, the fishery was deemed as healthy and the quota for the commercial sector and the bag limits for the recreational sector were deemed suitable by Fisheries Queensland – but since 2020, it has been panic stations.

"If overfishing has occurred as the Minister has claimed, it has occurred under the direction of the Government who have fundamentally mismanaged the fishery or have failed to recognise the impacts of factors such as illegal fishing, shark predation and changes in species behavior.

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“The blame cannot be shifted onto the commercial sector who have done everything right based on law, and therefore we strongly urge the Minister to show compassion and arrange compensation as appropriate.”

KAP Deputy Leader and Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto said any reduction in the Total Allowable Commercial Catch (TACC) for commercial fishers would have devastating impacts on the commercial, retail, hospitality, and tourism sectors.

“It raised a red flag when the State Government changed the modelling to conduct the 2020 stock assessment,” Mr Dametto said.

“When the data contradicts what our commercial fishers are witnessing in their day-to-day jobs it makes them question the validity and the application of the recent modelling.

“Despite these widespread concerns about the validity of the new modelling the Palaszczuk Government is hell-bent on following its new data in the aim of reaching sustainability targets.

“If they need to proceed down this path, we will have to accept it but not without making sure the State Government acknowledges their outrageous failings on this fishery – compensation for lost tonnage is the only fair way forward.

“Last week I meet with a group of commercial Spanish mackerel fishers up in the North, and they feel extremely frustrated and desperate by what is transpiring.

“Worst of all, this is all through no fault of their own.

“Our commercial Spanish mackerel fishers are hurting; they’ve been put in an unfair and desperate situation and they are calling for the Government to compensate for any reduction in the TACC.”

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