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14/09/2022

Spanish mackerel fishers on the chopping block as State Labor Government takes action

Katter's Australian Party (KAP) Deputy Leader and Hinchinbrook MP Nick Dametto has slammed the Palaszczuk Labor Government for refusing to take any responsibility over the industry-destroying intervention it has taken in relation to the State's mismanaged Spanish mackerel fishery.

Today Minister for Agriculture Industry Development and Fisheries Mark Furner announced that new management arrangements for Spanish mackerel would be introduced from October this year in the aim to rebuild stocks.¹

The changes will mean two three-week closed seasons in waters off the state's north starting in October 2022, and two three-week closed seasons in southern waters starting in February 2023.

Starting on 1 July 2023, commercial fishers will also have a reduced Total Allowable Catch (TAC) to 165 tonnes.

Recreational fishers will also see a change in the in-possession limit to one fish per person or two fish per boat with two or more recreational fishers on board from 1 July 2023.

The Hinchinbrook MP said the action was akin to wiping out the Spanish Mackerel commercial fishing industry and was bitterly disappointing to both commercial and recreational fishers in North Queensland.

"Today we've seen Minister Furner do a 'fly-in fly-out' visit to make this announcement in Townsville when he should have been down at Dungeness engaging with commercial fishers like the numerous Spanish mackerel fishers from Latitude 19 whose livelihoods are now on the line," he said.

"Only a few months after the season commenced and Spanish mackerel commercial fishers in the North now need to prepare to park up their vessels in the coming weeks, that's just poor form.

"Our Spanish mackerel commercial fishers have been dragged through the mud this year with little to no consultation, uncertainty, and a lack of transparency from the Department.

¹ <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/96148>

NICK DAMETTO
Member for Hinchinbrook



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"These changes will not just have devastating impacts for our commercial fishers, but they will have a ripple effect on our retailers and consumers.

"Consumers can now expect the price of Spanish mackerel to go through the roof, and our seafood outlets to be flooded with imports, thanks to the State Labor Government's action at the 11th hour."

Mr Dametto said even if the action announced today was justifiable in a bid to replenish fish stocks, there was yet to be any ownership taken by the Fisheries Department over the alleged "over-fishing" that they had presided over.

The Fisheries Department has had strict commercial take limits in place since the early 2000s, but the commercial fishing sector has never reached or exceeded these quotas meaning overfishing cannot be the result of their actions.

"Despite this, it is our commercial – and also our recreational – fishers who will bear the brunt of today's decision and by extension, the Queensland consumer of Spanish mackerel as well."

—ENDS—

Photo: State Member for Hinchinbrook and KAP Deputy Leader, Nick Dametto.

Media Enquiries: Caitlin Schofield 0402 352 343.