

Mr Michael Thompson  
58 Zunker Street  
**BURNETT HEADS QLD 4670**

Dear Mr Thompson

I refer to the Petition tabled in the Queensland Legislative Assembly, with you nominated as principal petitioner, concerning a request to close the Burnett Heads Harbour to commercial fishing.

The Queensland Government is committed to managing fisheries resources on a sustainable basis for the benefit of the whole community. To ensure this occurs a wide variety of controls are applied through the *Fisheries Regulation 1995* and various fishery management plans. These controls include gear and apparatus restrictions, seasonal and spatial closures and output controls such as size and in-possession limits.

In managing fisheries resources consideration must be given to the role commercial fishing plays in providing people who do not fish with the opportunity to enjoy and eat seafood. Allowing continued access to the commercial sector is based on the principle of fairness and an equal opportunity for all members of the community to share access to our natural resources. The commercial fishing sector in particular have experienced a number of restrictions over the past twelve months and there should be a reasonable time period for them to adjust before further restrictions on access.

There are a number of areas along the Queensland coast where members of local communities are calling for increased restrictions on commercial fishing. The potential relocation of fishing effort is a major consideration when changes to management arrangements for commercial fisheries are being contemplated. There is always the danger that closing one area will simply move the fishing effort to another place, and all such proposals must be considered in relation to the entire fishery and not just the area of immediate concern.

Resource allocation is traditionally one of the most complex and challenging issues faced by fisheries resource managers. In light of these access issues, the Queensland Fisheries Service (QFS) has developed a Fisheries Resource Allocation Policy, which sets out principles and a process to be used when considering proposals for changes to fisheries allocation arrangements. It is within the scope of this Policy that fisheries resource allocation issues, including fishing closures, will be considered. The process is intended to operate in parallel to the fisheries management planning process. For further information on the Policy process, please contact Mr Terry Healy from the Department of Primary Industries on (07) 3405 6805.

While the Government is taking a more strategic approach to fisheries resource allocation, there may be circumstances in which it would be more appropriate to explore other solutions to "one off" allocation issues or disputes. This could involve the QFS facilitating discussions amongst the local community, recreational fishers and other interested bodies such as the local council, community groups and business and tourism interests. Such issues could then proceed through the QFS Management Advisory Committee (MAC) process that provides management advice on the sustainable use of fisheries resources.

The Inshore Finfish MAC provides advice on inshore finfish species on the east coast and Trawl MAC provides advice on east coast trawl species. It is expected that a draft Inshore Finfish Management Plan, including management arrangements impacting on the Burnett River area, will be distributed for public comment in 2005. I would encourage you to provide a response on the proposals at that time.

If you require any further information regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Ms Fran Trippett of the Department of Primary Industries on telephone (07) 3239 0436.

Yours sincerely

Henry Palaszczuk MP  
**Minister for Primary Industries  
and Rural Communities**