



Hon Bill Byrne MP  
Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and  
Minister for Sport and Racing

Reference: CTS 25268/15

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Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Queensland Parliamentary Services  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

Thank you for your letter of 19 October 2015 concerning petition numbers 2476-15 and 2405-15 received by the House on 14 October 2015 regarding the establishment of three net free fishing zones in Queensland.

The Palaszczuk Government took a commitment to the last election to establish three net free fishing zones, one in Cairns, one near Seaforth to the north of Mackay and one along the Capricorn Coast, including Keppel Bay and the Fitzroy River. Since forming Government the implementation of these zones has also been a commitment that Australia has made to the international community by being incorporated into *The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan*, endorsed by the State and Federal Governments and submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

The Queensland Government recognises that commercial fishing businesses will be impacted as a direct result of the introduction of the net free zones. To assist commercial net fishers adjust to the new arrangements, the Government will spend \$10 million funding three schemes aimed at mitigating these impacts through the provision of financial assistance.

These schemes include a buyback scheme that will aim to reduce the overall number of commercial fishing licences, so as to prevent commercial fishing effort being displaced into other areas. A settlement scheme that will provide commercial fishers, directly affected by the zones' introduction, with a payment which will be based upon their historic effort in these areas, and an impact alleviation scheme that will provide an additional payment to those commercial fishers who historically recorded the majority of their commercial fishing effort in these areas.

The assistance provided to the commercial fishing industry through these schemes is well in excess of the amount of compensation which is obliged to be provided, in accordance with the *Fisheries Act 1994*.

To ensure that the Queensland community will continue to be able to access locally caught seafood, it is intended that commercial trawling, line fishing and crabbing will be able to continue within the boundaries of the proposed net free zones. Outside of these areas, the regulations which apply to the commercial net fishing sector will remain unchanged. As a consequence, the ability of the Queensland fishing industry is on balance still expected to be capable of providing Queenslanders with access to locally caught seafood.

I would also like to reinforce that the Government's Sustainable Fishing Policy recognises that there is a role for all fishing sectors in Queensland. The establishment of the three net free zones is a means of formally recognising and developing the important economic contribution that recreational fishing and recreational fishing related tourism can make to regional Queensland communities.

I trust this information is of assistance to petitioners.

If your Office requires any further information, please contact Mr Elliot Stein, Chief of Staff, in my Office on telephone 07 3719 7560.

Yours sincerely



**The Honourable Bill Byrne MP**  
**Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and**  
**Minister for Sport and Racing**  
**Member for Rockhampton**