

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **"PERVERSION OF DEMOCRACY" IN MORETON BAY REZONING**

**A "PERVERSION of democracy" in rezoning Moreton Bay Marine Park could sacrifice thousands of jobs, rob Queenslanders of fresh local fish and cost taxpayers unnecessary tens of millions of dollars.**

That is the view of professional fishermen, who have called on the Queensland Government to investigate the Environmental Protection Agency's handling of the Moreton Bay Marine Park rezoning.

Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) President Neil Green said today the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was trying to impose "enormously expensive" restrictions on use of Moreton Bay based on support from a "tiny, tiny minority" of Queenslanders.

"This is a perversion of democracy," Mr Green said. "According to EPA figures, around 4,500 people have requested 30% or more of Moreton Bay should be closed to all forms of fishing. That is something like zero point zero one of a per cent of the Queensland population -- not much more than one in a thousand from Queensland's population of more than four million.

"Even then, the vast majority of these responses were form letters generated by environmental lobby groups who can be guaranteed to give EPA the appearance of support on any issue at all.

"Yet, EPA clearly sees this as some sort of victory in its campaign to impose fishing bans over large parts of Moreton Bay that we believe could be better sited to reduce harm on fishing families, fishing related jobs and seafood supplies.

"You could probably generate just as many letters from people who would support the return of the death penalty. That doesn't mean the Government would -- nor should -- do it," he said.

Mr Green also said EPA's handling of the rezoning should be investigated, including their funding of like-minded environmental lobby organisations.

"Most of these support letters for bigger closures of Moreton Bay -- bigger than the State Government has apparently contemplated to date -- have been generated by campaigns by environmental lobbyists like the Queensland Conservation Council (QCC).

"If you go to the QCC website, you will see they are part of a campaign to have at least one-third of Moreton Bay Marine Park closed to all forms of fishing in "green zones".

"But just a month ago (February 27), EPA gave the QCC more than \$570,000 in funding. That was just a direct gift from EPA for QCC to fund its operations. How much of that money is going towards trying to close Moreton Bay to commercial and recreational fishing?"

"When environmental lobbyists are given a war chest like that by the EPA, how can fishing industry organisations like ours, relying on voluntary membership fees, be expected to compete in what is obviously regarded as a PR and lobbying campaign.

"You can see what the QCC tactics are. Just look at their website. They are trying to organise as many protest letters as possible and other lobbying activities to influence the Queensland Government, and they are doing it with taxpayers' money provided by the EPA.

"Then the EPA will claim it is responding to community requests for greater protection of Moreton Bay Marine Park when these are in fact mostly form letters generated by an organisation funded by EPA itself. What sort of farce is that?"

Mr Gren said the fishing industry had been assured at the beginning of the process that rezoning of Moreton Bay Marine Park was not a "numbers game".

"However, what we see now is great play being made of the fact a majority of the relatively small numbers of Queenslanders who responded to EPA's draft rezoning plan have requested even larger areas be closed, in line with the campaign of environmental lobbyists like QCC.

"Some 4,500 people out of the 8,000 in total who responded have asked for 30% or more total fishing closures, the vast majority of them without any understanding of what that will do to fishing families, jobs in dependent industries or fish supplies in south-east Queensland. Then they will happily just move on to the next issue, wherever the lobby groups direct them.

"I agree greater protection is needed for Moreton Bay, and where that should start is protecting it from pollution of all sorts from surrounding land. Protect the water quality in Moreton Bay for a start and the near-shore juvenile nursery habitat for fish and other sea life.

"Moreton Bay is regarded as being a wonderful marine environment right now, with hundreds of dugong, large numbers of turtles and plenty of fish and other seafood. And that is the situation after more than 150 years of commercial fishing, including over 50 years of prawn trawling, so fishing clearly is not a problem.

"EPA are going out of their way to decimate commercial fishing in particular in Moreton Bay, aided and abetted by their friends in environmental lobbying organisations, and it's all unnecessary.

"Commercial and recreational fishermen all support sensible protection of Moreton Bay, including green zones in 10% of Marine Park, but we believe the proposed zones need to be repositioned to give protection to habitat while minimising unnecessary damage to fishing.

"Unfortunately, EPA don't seem to want to listen. They have given up objective science and replaced it with advocacy, and they look to be pushing for an extreme position in conjunction with their fellow environmental lobbyists outside government.

"This is potentially going to sacrifice thousands of jobs, rob Queenslanders of fresh local fish and cost taxpayers unnecessary tens of millions of dollars in compensation.

"It stinks and the Queensland Government should be taking a long, hard look at what the Environmental Protection Agency is trying to force them into here before it's too late. Queensland should not be run by a tiny minority of uncaring activists and their gullible followers."

**Further information:** Mr Neil Green 0408 182 252 or 3491 3180

Also see: Announcement of EPA funding for QCC at:  
<http://www.cabinet.qld.gov.au/MMS/StatementDisplaySingle.aspx?id=56713>

QCC website at: <http://www.qccqld.org.au/>