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FISHERMEN “SKEPTICAL” ABOUT CORAL TROUT CLAIMS

FISHERMEN have reacted skeptically to reports of big increases in coral trout numbers on the Great Barrier Reef.

Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) President Mr Neil Green dismissed the reports as “too convenient and too soon”.

“These reports will have originated from the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and, frankly, these days no fishermen would believe any statement from GBRMPA,” Mr Green said.

“I have asked for a copy of the report on which these claims are supposedly based and we will have the report independently assessed.

“GBRMPA have trouble with numbers, They estimated the cost of their fishing closures would be no more than \$2.5 million a year and so far it’s cost the Federal Government close to \$100 million, so their track record is not good.”

Mr Green was responding to a media release from Federal Environment Minister Senator Ian Campbell.

Senator Campbell said data from recent monitoring indicated the new green zones throughout the Great Barrier Reef were showing substantive positive benefits.

“I can understand that GBRMPA are trying to get themselves off the hook but claims about big increases -- and a figure of a 70% increase was mentioned in one media report -- are just too convenient and too soon,” Mr Green said.

“As I understand it, researchers don’t expect the full impact of the no-fishing green zones to be known for five to 10 years. Coral trout are not even of catchable size until they are three years of age and the closures have only been in place for two years.

“All through the whole tragic rezoning process, GBRMPA tried to hype the benefits and hide the costs, and it looks like they’re still repeating the same tricks.

“GBRMPA haven’t learnt a thing or changed their bad old habits, despite all the suffering they’ve caused.”

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