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## **SEAFOOD INDUSTRY WANTS CLARIFICATION OF FISHING PARTY POLICY**

SEAFOOD industry representatives have ridiculed reported comments by Fishing Party-backed State election candidate Peter Todd and called for clarification of the group's policy on professional fishing.

Queensland Seafood Industry Association (QSIA) President Neil Green said statements attributed to Peter Todd in "The Cairns Post" newspaper recently had damaged the Fishing Party's reputation for being representative of broader seafood industry views -- rather than simply the views of recreational fishing lobbyists.

"The statements attributed to Peter reflect narrow self-interest and ignorance or deliberate misrepresentation of the facts about net fishing," Mr Green said. "I am disappointed he has apparently been speaking this way as a member of the Fishing Party and a candidate for the forthcoming State election.

"I did not believe the Fishing Party was taking a position of dividing recreational and professional fishing but, rather, was working to unite both groups to defend all fishing rights against unjustifiable fishing bans and other access restrictions denying the great majority of the public the opportunity to buy fresh local fish and denying recreational anglers the chance to relax with a fishing line."

Mr Green said the QSIA was actively trying to build better relationships with anglers throughout the State.

"From Cape York to Moreton Bay, we have been trying to work with anglers on issues of common interest," he said. "When it comes to cooperation between recreational anglers and professional fishermen, the QSIA believes the issues that unite us are far more important than the issues that divide us, and we try to rise above petty squabbling.

"If Peter has been correctly reported as describing offshore set gill nets as 'walls of death', a very tired, very emotional and very worn old cliché, then he needs to lift his game, and act a little more like a statesman and less like a gutter politician.

"Various people have suggested ganging up against charter boat operators because they think there's mileage in promoting the public perception that charter boat operators callously exploit the black marlin spawning migration to the Cairns region by deliberately targeting egg-bearing females, which is what the heaviest black marlin are, but we won't have a bar of that. We prefer to work with charter boat operators rather than against them.

“It is disappointing to see what Peter’s perception of a political candidate is, making statements he thinks are popular, based on his misconceptions or misrepresentations about offshore net fishing.

“But more important than Peter’s posturing is the position of the Fishing Party. Is the Fishing Party going to divide professional and recreational fishing groups with inflammatory public statements or work to bring both groups together to win issues of common interest?”

Mr Green said Labor Party candidate Steve Wettenhall should also clarify his position on professional fishermen and the supply of seafood in the Cairns region, if he has been reported accurately by local media.

“I can understand that Mr Wettenhall is a first-time candidate in the seat of Barron River and might be finding it a bit demanding, but he needs to study the facts about fishing and the policy of the State Government before talking about shutting down any more commercial fishing grounds,” Mr Green said.

“Mr Wettenhall is obviously someone with soft hands who has spent his working life in air-conditioned offices and comfy chairs. That’s his choice. However, before condemning hard-working primary producers like professional fishermen to the dole and taking more fresh fish away from local consumers, he should at least leave the air conditioning long enough to talk to the people whose jobs he would destroy.

“The Labor Party I know is not in the business of putting hard-working primary producers out of work. I will get in touch with his office and pass on the names of some local fishermen he can talk to and update himself on the facts about fishing and the sustainability of fish stocks.”

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