



National Campaign Headquarters

Fishing and Seafood Statement 2010

Gillard Government commitment to the Australian fishing industry

Julia Gillard is committed to the dignity of hard work. Very few of us work under quite the same circumstances as those in the seafood industry.

Many Australians don't consider when they prepare Australian seafood, at home or in a restaurant, that someone has spent days at sea to harvest that high quality product and bring it to them. People can take it for granted that someone arrived at work before 4am at the Sydney Fish Market to ensure their product was fresh and safe before it was put on display to sell or distributed to a retail outlet.

A re-elected Gillard Government is committed to a prosperous future for the Australian seafood industry.

Australian wild harvest fisheries – state and Commonwealth – are among the best managed and most sustainable in the world. There has historically been a bi-partisan approach to fisheries management which recognises that wild harvest fishing and aquaculture for food production account for some 16,000 jobs, the vast majority of which are in regional coastal communities. The seafood industry contributes to food security and to Australia's reputation as a supplier of safe, high quality food.

Commercial fishing, in particular, has come under much public scrutiny in recent times. Wild harvest fishing uses a common but renewable resource. Even when fish species have been overfished, government and industry have demonstrated how they can work together to put in place rebuilding strategies and restore the state of fish stocks.

A Federal Labor Government has improved certainty for the fishing industry by reducing the number of commercially harvested stocks where the status of the stock was unknown. We have also

introduced legislation to reduce the cost of fisheries management to Commonwealth fishers and developed a recreational fishing industry strategy to guide government investment into the future.

Some tough decisions have been made along the way. In response to data which suggested fishing restrictions agreed to by the Howard Government were not sufficiently robust to ensure the recovery of the Southern Bluefin Tuna stocks the Federal Labor Government, along with other fishing nations, accepted a cut in the quota for Southern Bluefin Tuna. These decisions are not always popular. But they are necessary to ensure future generations of fishers and associated aquaculture operators have a supply of this iconic species from which to derive their livelihood.

Likewise, when fish stocks recover, we have been able to reopen commercial fishing, as was the case with the Bass Strait Central Zone Scallop Fishery in 2009.

The Government takes a hard line against illegal foreign fishing. Illegal fishing impacts on the income of Australian fishers and the sustainability of our fisheries. The Government has maintained rigorous ongoing surveillance and enforcement to preserve the integrity and security of our borders, including by deterring illegal fishing and thereby protecting Australian jobs and our environment.

Our precious ocean resources must not be plundered by illegal foreign fishing. Illegal foreign fishing has declined in Australian waters due to increased enforcement measures by Australian authorities. There were 27 apprehensions in 2008-09 compared to 367 in 2005-06.

Recognising the common nature of investment in fisheries research, the Government has continued to provide the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) up to 75 per cent of all FRDC funds.

This contribution has helped ensure that up to \$2.5 million could be allocated, through the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC), to investigate the decline in fish stocks and possible solutions for Australia's most valuable fishery, Western Rock Lobster.

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We have worked with the seafood industry to promote seafood innovation and develop markets for Australian seafood, through the FRDC, the Promoting Australia's Produce and Regional Food Producers, Innovation and Productivity Program.

Resource Access

The Australian Labor Party recognises there is some concern in the community about proposals by some non-government organisations to implement huge no-take marine parks.

A Gillard Labor Government offers the best policy for resource security for wild harvest fishers.

A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will make decisions about marine parks, including multi-use marine parks that include commercial and recreational harvest, according to the best available science. It will consider the economic, social and environmental consequences before implementing decisions.

A re-elected Gillard Government will consult closely with those people and industries that use the marine environment, including the recreational and commercial fishing sectors, to determine marine protected areas in accordance with relevant legislation and other regulatory frameworks including those evident within fisheries management arrangements and state marine parks.

None of the other parties in this election have a responsible marine policy. Labor's policy is about being up front with industry, with on-shore businesses and with recreational users. Labor's policy will deliver appropriate habitat protection and long term resource certainty for all marine users.

Displaced Fishing Policy

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The Federal Labor Government has consistently maintained the bioregional planning process will work towards minimising the impact of marine park proposals – including no take zones and multi use zones – on existing users.

A re-elected Labor Government will consider the science and continue to work with marine users and communities toward a sustainable future for industry and communities and to minimise the impact of conservation measures on the fishing industry.

If some impact on industries is unavoidable, a re-elected Gillard Labor Government will provide fair and reasonable assistance to industries affected by marine protection.

Research, Development and Extension (RD&E)

The Gillard Government recognises the important role of the FRDC in supporting the productivity and sustainability of Australia's wild-catch and aquaculture suppliers. The FRDC also plays a critical role in supporting research into the recreational fishing experience and traditional harvest practices for Indigenous communities. In recognition of the public good nature of the FRDC, the Australian Government funds up to 75 per cent of the corporation's annual budget.

Promoting Australian Industry

The Federal Labor Government has been in discussion for some time with several seafood industry representatives about the establishment of appropriate seafood levy mechanisms to support marketing and promotion of Australian seafood products.

Recently the Federal Labor Government wrote to various seafood industry interests inviting them to provide advice on whether a proposal to establish a marketing function for the Fisheries Research and Development Corporation would help the Australian seafood industry, similar to arrangements which exist for the red meat and egg industries.

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The vast majority of feedback received from industry to the Government to date supports such an arrangement and a proposal to establish a marketing function within the FRDC are supported by the National Seafood Industry Alliance.

Pending the outcome of the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Rural Research and Development Corporations, a re-elected Gillard Government will introduce legislation to support the establishment of a marketing function alongside FRDC's research role. Any statutory marketing levy flowing from those changes will need to be consistent with the longstanding *Levy principles and guidelines*, which require a critical mass of industry agreement.

Country of origin labelling

The Federal Labor Government recognises industry's desire to extend Country of Origin Labelling obligations to the food services sector.

The Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council (Ministerial Council) announced, on 23 October 2009, that former Australian Health Minister, Dr Neal Blewett AC, will head up the Panel which will undertake a comprehensive examination of food labelling law and policy. Dr Blewett was a pioneer of Australia's universal Medicare health system and is a strong advocate for the rights of consumers.

The review has received more than 6,000 submissions, including submissions that relate to the Country of Origin Labelling and the food services sector and will make recommendations to Government through the Australia and New Zealand Food Regulation Ministerial Council. It is anticipated that the review will be presented to the Australian and state governments later in 2010.

Cost of doing business

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The Gillard Labor Government is committed to cutting red-tape and working to reduce the cost of doing business. Federal Labor has been cutting red tape in 27 different areas. The Federal Labor Government has already delivered more than one third of the ambitious five year agenda set when we were elected in 2007

Under Labor's Fair Work system, all employers and employees in the national system are covered by a minimum safety net of the National Employment Standards and modern awards tailored to each industry.

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