1. *The Sustainable Fishing Policy*, released during the 2015 election, committed $10 million to introduce three Net Free Zones near Cairns, Mackay and Rockhampton to grow the economic benefits from recreational and charter fishing. That commitment was also subsequently included in *The Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan* endorsed by the State and Commonweath Governments and submitted to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.
2. The introduction of the three Zones aims to maximise the economic value that Queenslanders receive from sustainable management of fisheries resources.
3. An analysis of commercial net fishing catch and effort data from the zones for 2012-2014 show that less than 80 of the 411 netting licences able to access the Zones have actually operated in the Zones. Overall the total netting catch from the Zones in this period has represented less than 8% of the total east coast netting catch. However, the percentage of catch for some individual species is more, for example barramundi catch in the Zones represented 30% of the total east coast netting catch over this time.
4. Commercial trawl, line and crab access and management will not change with the introduction of the Zones. It is not anticipated the Zones will significantly reduce regional community’s access to Queensland fresh fish which is available from other sources. Over time it is expected that any short term impact on local economies and jobs will be more than offset by economic benefits gained from improved recreational fishing.
5. The proposed zone boundaries buyback scheme and settlement scheme make up the implementation package for the Zones.
6. The aim of the voluntary buyback scheme is to ensure that the number of commercial fishing boat licences is reduced to prevent an increase in commercial fishing effort in other areas or in other fisheries.
7. The aim of the settlement scheme is to provide financial assistance to those fishers whose income will be directly impacted by the introduction of the Zones. Funds can be used for any purpose including re-training, re-locating or paying down debt.
8. Cabinet approved the implementation package for Net Free Zones which includes zone boundaries, a buyback scheme and a settlement scheme.
9. Cabinet approved that the regulatory amendments required to give effect to the implementation package be submitted directly to the Governor in Council for approval.
10. Cabinet noted the Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries and Minister of Sport and Racing would publically announce the implementation package.
11. *Attachments*
* [Fisheries and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015](Attachments/Regulation.PDF)
* [Explanatory Notes for Fisheries and Another Regulation Amendment Regulation (No. 1) 2015](Attachments/ExNotes.PDF)