1. The commercial fishing industry was one of the first industries to be affected by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) due to the loss of key export markets in early 2020. As Australia responded to the pandemic and social restrictions were imposed, there was also a loss of domestic markets further affecting Queensland’s seafood industry. The commercial fishing sector continues to face significant economic hardship because of reduced hospitality and tourism markets as well as disruptions to freight markets.
2. There are 18 commercial fisheries in Queensland that have wildlife trade operations approvals, subject to conditions, under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwlth) (EPBC Act). The Commonwealth Minister for Environment wrote on the 6 September 2020 advising that the EPBC Act export approval would be revoked on 30 September 2020 for non-compliance against conditions that require consideration of the reforms. Unless urgent action was taken, there was a risk that export from the East Coast Inshore fishery would cease, with further fisheries at risk of not being reassessed and also impacted before the end of 2020 and seven more in 2021.
3. The Government released the Queensland *Sustainable Fisheries Strategy 2017-2027* (the Strategy) in June 2017. A key action of the Strategy, and a condition of multiple EPBC Act approvals, is the establishment of harvest strategies for key fisheries. Harvest strategies specify pre-determined management actions necessary to achieve ecological, economic and/or social objectives of a fishery.
4. Investment and increased fishing effort warnings have been in place for all Queensland commercial fisheries since March 2014. This creates access and investment uncertainty, compromises the ability of fishing businesses to access commercial finance, and reduces innovation and investment.
5. Changes to commercial fishing regulation in the Fisheries Legislation Amendment Regulation 2020 will assist the economic recovery of the industry by reducing red tape and making urgent changes to meet conditions of EPBC Act approvals. These changes will also enable the removal of investment warnings.
6. Extensive consultation has been undertaken on the changes.
7. Cabinet endorsed recommending the Fisheries Legislation Amendment Regulation 2020 to the Governor in Council for approval.
8. *Attachments*
   * [Fisheries Legislation Amendment Regulation 2020](Attachments/Reg.PDF)
   * [Explanatory Notes](Attachments/ExNotes.PDF)
   * [Human Rights Certificate](Attachments/HRC.PDF)