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SHADOW FISHERIES MINISTER
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RUBBERY ANSWERS ON FISHING

Recent comments by Fisheries Minister Kon Vatskalis have highlighted the Henderson Government’s policy failures in the area of commercial fishing buybacks.

Shadow Fisheries Minister Willem Westra van Holthe said it’s further proof that after eight years in Government, Labor has no plan and no serious commitment to change.

Mr Westra van Holthe said: “In a question about the Henderson Government’s commitment to buy back commercial fishing licences, Kon Vatskalis replied:

In the past, we closed areas haphazardly, this time it will be a programmed closure of areas…

“This amounts to an admission by the Minister that the last 8 years of Labor has been blighted by a lack of policy and direction.

“Decisions made about the sustainability of our barra fisheries should be based on evidence and science, not done haphazardly.

“The fact that the Minister has only just appointed a Barramundi Fishery Management Advisory Group to advise the Government on future closures is further confirmation that they have no direction.

“The Henderson government has had 8 years to put together a Strategic Plan for NT Fisheries.

“Despite the fact that the Seafood Council and AFANT have done their own studies, the government still goes from one knee-jerk reaction to another without anything that resembles a plan.

“Rubbery figures provided by the Minister also tear at his credibility.

“He said, ‘I am very pleased to say that we now have bought three barramundi commercial fishing licences…”.

“What he didn’t say is that they have actually only bought back the equivalent of 2.3 licences from commercial fishermen, which is only three-quarters of their election commitment.”
“We should also be mindful that this has actually taken the Henderson government 4 years to achieve and was brought to a head only in response to overwhelming pressure from AFANT, just prior to their last Annual General Meeting.

“The Country Liberals are committed to developing a long term strategic plan for all the fisheries across the Territory.

“A Country Liberals Government would consult, listen and make decisions based on sound research and science.

“This is a commitment and an approach that the current Labor government has never pursued.”

Further comment: Willem Westra van Holthe 0414 778 430