



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBA

Hansard 13 December 2001

REVOCATION OF MARINE PARK AREAS

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumba—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (11.34 a.m.), in reply: I thank the honourable member for Keppel for his qualified support and his 26 points. He made a very large number of points. I understand that the Lord God had only 10, but we take them on board. I will get back to the honourable member for Keppel about them. I know that a lot of the issues he raised concern the issue of safety. Of course, we are never totally safe—never utterly and completely safe, as the philosopher Wittgenstein said.

Mr Lester: We are a bit less safe than usual. That is the problem.

Mr WELLS: Well, I will draw the member's concerns about it to the Minister for State Development, and undoubtedly we will get back to him. The member for Thuringowa asked that Magnetic Island be included in the management plan for the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area. I will take her idea on board and consult with the appropriate people.

I will be very frank, because we do not need to protract this. We have a court case going on. There are only two possible outcomes: the government can win or the government can lose. If the government wins the court case then absolutely nothing happens. The Nelly Bay harbour is built and it just goes on being built. If the government loses—that is the only other possible outcome—then the Nelly Bay harbour is not going to get unbuilt. It is a fait accompli. It is done. It cannot be restored to the conservation status that it previously had.

The only possible outcome from a negative finding against the government in the courts is that the government would be required to go through the process we are going through today. Why not go through it today and put an end to unnecessary court proceedings? The conservation groups that wanted to achieve an outcome have achieved the only positive outcome they could have achieved if the matter had gone to court. So why should I, responsible as I am for taxpayers' dollars, allow a court case to continue—this being publicly funded on both sides—when we can generate the only outcome the government could possibly generate if it lost the court case just by doing this?

For a little bit of our time here we can save a great deal of public money. That is why we are doing it. Let us be frank about it: there is no reason other than that for doing it. There is no acrimony. There is no animosity. There is nothing more to it than simply our custodianship of taxpayers' dollars. That is what we are saving by passing this revocation motion. I thank all honourable members for their support.
