



Speech by

Hon. D. WELLS

MEMBER FOR MURRUMBIDGE

Hansard 30 April 2003

MORETON BAY MARINE PARK

Hon. D. M. WELLS (Murrumbidgee—ALP) (Minister for Environment) (6.14 p.m.): In a spirit of generosity, I cannot but commend the sentiments of the honourable member for Southern Downs and the honourable member for Robina. However, this government and this parliament is bound by a statutory process established by this parliament. That statutory process is contained in this document, which I tabled yesterday at the Moreton Bay waterways and catchment partnership policy council. I table it now. Therefore, it is necessary for me to move the following amendment—

That all words after 'that' be omitted and the following words inserted—

'this House notes that there is a statutory process that must be undertaken in respect of proposals for fish farms. It further notes achievements of the Beattie government in respect of promoting a pristine environment for the Moreton Bay Marine Park by:

- placing limitations on land clearing;
- improving water quality in the bay by working with the waterways partnership to reduce pollution;
- prosecuting those who pollute the water quality entering the bay; and
- protecting the eco system of the bay by maintaining its biodiversity.'

In a democracy, it is the rule of law that guarantees people their freedom. We should not set aside a process established by parliament just because we are convinced that the end result should be a prescription for government by the whim of the rulers, not a government of laws. The proposition that government should be of laws rather than the whim of the rulers is one that has been around since Hammurabi of Babylon introduced his code of laws in the year 1760 BC. In a fine, nostalgic flourish, the opposition wants to revert to a time before Hammurabi of Babylon.

The process that the opposition proposes to set aside is, in fact, one that was established in part by the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Liberal Party themselves. The Moreton Bay Marine Park Zoning Plan 1997 provided regulations to protect the values of the bay. It regulated activities that affected the values of the bay. It is a scientific question under those regulations as to whether a proposed fish farm is going to negatively affect the values of the bay. We may very well guess at what the results of such a scientific inquiry might be, but it would be the height of arrogance for us to purport to decide on a whim, on instinct, what that result would be.

So that is one piece of legislation that the former coalition government put in place that governs what we are now doing. But I want to go back to the year 1997—in fact, 30 October 1997—and the minister's second reading speech on the integrated planning legislation. Minister Di McCauley, the ministerial colleague of both the honourable members who have just spoken, said that there would be no prohibitions on any application and that governments cannot refuse to consider an application simply because the government does not like it. That was the process that the previous coalition government established. We could imagine that at that time the Leader of the Opposition, then in his capacity as the member for Warwick, may very well have sat beside his ministerial colleague and said 'Hear, hear!' to the very proposition that he is now controverting. The proposition that we should ignore such a process shows very little faith in the process that the former coalition government established.

We on this side of the House have a long history of working to preserve the pristine values of the bay. In February 1993 we declared the Moreton Bay Marine Park and the strategic plan that fell under that marine park. I have told this House before of initiatives that we have recently taken to establish go-slow zones in the marine park for turtles and dugong. We have a unique area. We can

look back from where the turtles gather and where the dugong feed on the seagrass and we can see the lighthouse in the Redlands, we can see the red cliffs of the peninsula and we can see the topless towers of Brisbane. We have done that to preserve that biodiversity. We are cleaning up the waters of the bay.

An amount of \$300 million of state and local government money has been committed between 1997 and 2005 to reduce discharge into our waterways and upgrade sewage treatment plants and waste-water recycling projects in south-east Queensland alone. That has led to an annual reduction of 1,100 tonnes of nitrogen discharged into our waterways. Twelve thousand, six hundred megalitres of effluent which previously used to enter the bay is now prevented from doing so, consistent with our Queensland Water Recycling Strategy. We have an Ecosystem Health Monitoring Program, an annual report card which grades areas of the bay from A to F. For continuous seasons that report card has been sustained or improving. They should have more faith in the process they themselves established.